



European Children's  
Film Association

Association Européenne du Cinéma  
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

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*interviews*

**Storm - Letters of Fire**

**Cloudboy**

**Not Without Us**

**Slovak Animation**

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# Journal

No. 1 | 2017

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*February*

*Photo: Not Without Us*

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My First Highway

## A new skin

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of the entire association, I wish you a beautiful 2017, and we hope this year will bring you as many innovative ideas in your projects as moments of happiness in your everyday life.

For ECFA, 2017 marks a year of change, transition and evolution. During the 6 years that I've been involved with great enthusiasm in the management of this body, I've been observing with close attention the growth of the anthill. ECFA is living material, with its fragilities and great strengths, and it's up to all of us to consolidate its roots and prune them carefully, to see all buds hatched in spring, more beautiful each year.

This entire period of preparing the soil and vegetation, that is generally done in the shade, is primordial. ECFA's board and the entire team have worked a whole year on the new communication strategy, launched at the beginning of 2017 with a new website, a new logo and a new communication plan (designed by DBF Designbüro Frankfurt). It's not a pause or a sudden stop, but a real evolution of the organisation which in recent years has not ceased to welcome new members and propose new projects. Our constant objective is to facilitate a smooth connection between our members, to give visibility to projects carried out or supported by ECFA and to make better use of tools for sharing and participating.

The second concern is how to make ECFA evolve without losing its soul and its conviviality, which are indeed some of the great characteristics of this organism. We're considering the best strategy to adopt for the next few years, in order to facilitate more meetings for like-minded souls, or more ways for collaboration. Thus, we invite all members to become more involved in these dynamics.

2017 will indeed be a year of transition. After 6 years of dedication, I now pass the torch to the new team that will be set up after the AGM, allowing me the pleasure to welcome you one last time at the Berlinale on Saturday 11th February!

—  
Céline Ravenel



## Nominated for the ECFA Awards 2017

*11 titles on one ECFA shortlist, showcasing the best European productions for children in 2016.*

In consultation with a number of children's film festivals, ECFA compiles a list of the best recent young audience films. From this list, more than 100 ECFA members select the overall winner. Last year, the honour went to *BIRDS OF PASSAGE* by the Belgian brothers Ringer. This year there are 11 nominees, including no less than five French titles. An overview:



**MY SKINNY SISTER** (Sanna Lenken, Sweden)

Stella idolises her big sister, who's perfect in almost everything. Until, through the threat of anorexia, the beautiful picture gets shattered.

*Nominated by: JEFF Festival (Antwerp, Bruges... Belgium)*



**LONG WAY NORTH** (Rémi Chayé, France)

An heroic trip to the pole by a young girl, walking in the footsteps of her deceased granddad. European animation celebrating its own unique vision.

*Nominated by: Ciné-Jeune Festival de l'Aisne (L'Aisne region, France)*



**THE NEW KID** (Rudi Rosenberg, France)

Benoit, new at school, seems a perfect target for bullying. Until he finds his own light-hearted way to deal with the situation.

*Nominated by: BUFF Int. Children & Youth Film Festival (Malmö, Sweden) & Kristiansand Int. Children's Film Festival (Norway)*



**LEARN BY HEART** (Mathieu Vadepied, France)

The suburban apartment life doesn't

offer young Adama much of a perspective for the future. A story from the Paris banlieues, setting a new light on the 'equal opportunities' policy.

*Nominated by: Int. Film Festival for Children & Youth (Zlin, Czech Republic)*



**BLANKA** (Kohki Hasei, Italy)

An orphan girl and a blind musician on a tour through the streets of Manila. A sharp analysis of seemingly local problems that have a universal relevance.

*Nominated by: Int. Children's Film Festival (Tel Aviv, Israel)*





**LES ENFANTS DE LA CHANCE** (Malik Chibane, Frankrijk)  
 During World War II Jewish children find shelter in a hospital in Paris. They hardly realise what dangers are awaiting them outside the safe walls.  
*Nominated by: Schlingel Int. Film Festival for Children & Young Audience (Chemnitz, Germany)*



**GOING TO SCHOOL (aka VILLADS FROM VALBY)** (Frederik Meldal Nørgaard, Denmark)  
 Villads goes to school for the very first time: a frightening event, but also a new world of opportunities opening up. Live action for toddlers.  
*Nominated by: The Int. Children's & Youth Film Festival (Oulu, Finland)*



**THE DAY MY FATHER BECAME A BUSH** (Nicole van Kilsdonk, The Netherlands)  
 In a country at war a young girl tries to get a grip on a world-on-the-loose. Adventure in the twilight zone between realism and surrealism.  
*Nominated by: KINOdiseea Int. Children's Film Festival (Bucharest, Romania)*



**MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI** (Claude Barras, France / Suisse)  
 In an orphanage young Zucchini must not only come to terms with the death of his mother, but also with a new life in difficult circumstances. This year's ultimate revelation in animation.  
*Nominated by: Ale Kino! Int. Young Audience Film Festival (Poznan, Poland)*



**CELESTIAL CAMEL** (Jury Feting, Russia)  
 On the lookout for his runaway camel, a young nomadic boy makes a journey through a bare desert landscape. A story deeply rooted in local traditions.  
*Nominated by: Olympia Children's Film Festival (Pyrgos, Greece)*



**RAUF** (Baris Kaya & Soner Caner, Turkey)  
 While war is raging in the mountains, 9 year old Rauf gets a job as a carpenter's apprentice. A Turkish and Kurdish director together have made a film with great visual eloquence.  
*Nominated by: Lucas Int. Children's Film Festival (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)*



**DANCING FOR YOU** (Erlend E. Mo, Norway)  
 Through practising the traditional 'Halling' dance, a young girl claims her place on stage among the men and strengthens the bond with her grandfather.  
*Nominated for the ECFA Docu Award by: doxs! festival for children & youth documentaries (Duisburg, Germany)*

The winner of the ECFA Award 2017 for 'Best Young Audience Film of the Year' will be announced on 11 February at the Treffen der Kinderfilmszene in Berlin.

# Storm - Letters of Fire

## “Your head could as well be chopped off”

*The prestigious historical adventure STORM – LETTERS OF FIRE is set in exciting times: the days when Martin Luther wrote his accusation to the Catholic church and war broke out between several religious groups. After scriptwriter Karen van Holst-Pelekaan was asked to adapt her script to a book, we meet her and main actors Juna de Leeuw (15) and Davy Gomez (12) in a most appropriate environment: at the International Antwerp Book Fair they discussed with the crowd the link between book and film. ‘The book is based on the scenario. I didn’t have to think about the story anymore, but could add extra layers to the characters.’*

Van Holst Pelekaan already wrote the script for SECRETS OF WAR and was responsible for buckets of tears shed over COOL KIDS DON’T CRY. Van Holst Pelekaan: “I even cried while writing it. Sometimes I read a draft script out loud to my husband and at page 70, we were already both sobbing uncon-

trollably on the couch and I couldn’t continue reading.”



Storm is the 12-year-old son of printer Klaas Voeten, who also secretly prints forbidden and banned writings. The year is 1521 and the Inquisition keeps a tight hand over the city. Storm’s life is turned upside down when Klaas gets arrested. When Storm, carrying with him a forbidden letter, is pursued by soldiers he gets help from Marieke, an orphan girl living in the sewers under the city. With Storm’s father’s life at stake, who can they trust? Van Holst Pelekaan: „In those days it wasn’t obvious to stand up for what you believed in. Your head could

as well be chopped off, or you ended up at the stake.”

### White Lie

“Historical accuracy was a challenge. I did plenty of research, stayed in Antwerp for a while, walked through sewers, visited the historical sites and talked to historians and teachers. The only element bringing us into the danger zone, was the name ‘Storm Voeten’. That is a white lie - surnames came in vogue only half a century later.”

“When describing the late medieval Antwerp, I paint a picture of something that no longer exists. What in my book seems to be a glorious city, actually was nothing more than a small shithole. An important city in the world, but very small compared to its current size. In a book you can add historical details. How did people live? What did they wear? In a film you only vaguely get to see that.”

### At the expense of the poor

“Until the early 16th century everyone was Catholic, that was never questioned: you believed in God, which you practiced in accordance to



the rules of the Catholic Church. The church allowed a handful of people to become wealthy at the expense of the poor. Upholding that situation could bring you power and control over the masses. Luther, rebelling against this injustice, found many supporters. For example in Belgium, where cities signed under the Inquisition’s merciless regime, which caused a massive wave of migrating refugees. That theme today didn’t lose a single bit of its relevance: fundamentalism and the abuse of religion to gain power, scares people out of their homes and off their land.”

„Antwerp was an important city for the development of the art of printing and the distribution of printed books. People could barely write and paper was scarce. Due to the printed press, knowledge (or ideologies such as Luther’s) for the first time could be transmitted on a large scale. Books



made people more assertive and critical. By reading and understanding the Bible, they were no longer depending on priests who spoke but Latin. Books that deviated from the prescribed opinion were burned. This terrible idea goes against one fundamental democratic value: the right to think, say and write what you want. If we can no longer guarantee that precious commodity, social media nowadays plays an important role, which was proven during the Arab Spring uprising: the power of the masses.

How familiar are youngsters with such interesting themes? Director Dennis Bots: „For all my films I test the historical awareness of my target audience. It always strikes me how smart kids are. Gaps in their knowledge, they fill up themselves with logical thinking, while adults prefer to see everything explained. Some basic knowledge is needed to understand the story, so we included extra background information in the opening scenes.”

### Like a shithouse

STORM - LETTERS OF FIRE takes you on a robust adventure. The sewer scenes make your nostrils tremble with stench. As the book describes:

‘it smelled like a shithouse right after the neighbours visit.’ Juna de Leeuw: „On the set (in a studio in Luxembourg) the water came up to our ankles. It was muddy, slippery and there were rats all around. Trained rats though, super sweet! After the shooting Davy and I were summoned to get them back in their boxes.”

Inspiration for these scenes, Bots found in a surprisingly contemporary medium. ‘With these tunnels I wanted to evoke a gaming feeling. I love those ‘filthy’ medieval times: streets are dirty, there’s trash everywhere. But to appeal to the audience of today, and being a gamer myself, I looked at the world of gaming. ‘Assassin’s Creed’ was an eye-opener for me: walking through the historic streets of Venice feels like a realistic experience. I wanted to evoke this game atmosphere through colour grading and set dressing.”

### Blindfolded

Throughout his career Bots developed his own methods with young actors. „More than ‘to act’ you want them to ‘respond to the situation’. Acting is: I hear bad news and then I ‘play sad’. But when you bring children into the



situation and make them respond intuitively to what concerns them, you get a better result. We improvised for example on ‘trust’: lone wolf Marieke must learn to trust Storm. When I asked Davy to lead her through a building blindfolded, her trust grew intuitively.”

It’s striking how Marieke, with physical strength and piercing gaze, claims her place in the movie. Van Holst Pelekaan: “Marieke slips into the church to talk to the Virgin Mother’s statue, who is kind of a surrogate mother to her. I wanted to show that religious symbols can also be beautiful and comforting. It’s not about rejecting

Catholicism, but about finding your own way of believing. That’s exactly what Marieke does.” De Leeuw: “There are two sides to Marieke: she’s a street cat, fighting and stealing. But she also has an innocent side. It’s that vulnerability that made this role so special.”

—  
Gert Hermans + Dutch FilmWorks

Contact: Phanta Vision, The Netherlands; [info@phantavision.com](mailto:info@phantavision.com); [www.phantavision.com](http://www.phantavision.com)

→ watch trailer

## Black Sheep by Christian Cerami

Sam is standing at a crossroads. The young man from Northland has no perspective and plenty of space for hostile images in his head. Together with his little brother Jack, he takes the train to Bradford to participate in an English Defence League demonstration, an islamophobic extremist organisation among the most significant right-wing groups in the UK. Initially shyly, then more confidently, he shouts their slogans. Jack stays aside at the edge and observes the roaring crowd from a distance - but for how long?



After the screening the questions from the doxs! crowd are only coming slowly. The young audience is in doubt: director Christian Cerami's filmic observation is so honest that

they're not sure up to what extent BLACK SHEEP expresses his own socio-political orientation. In other words: is he a supporter of the English Defence League? Cerami: "Not in the least! But I grew up in that same neighbourhood, amidst similar youngsters who also offered me to join them for demonstrations. Sam and Jack, the boys in the movie, have no idea what kind of picture BLACK SHEEP tries to paint. They came to ask me for a copy of the film, to impress their classmates and/or a girl."

"The shooting was rather thrilling experience. The Defence League doesn't like no sneaking around. The presence of a camera was not appreciated, which at a certain moment was made clear to me in a unmistakable way. That's where the filming ended."

### GROSSE KLAPPE 2016

BLACK SHEEP by British director Christian Cerami was awarded with the European film prize 'Grosse Klappe' at the doxs! festival 2016 in Duisburg. Endowed by the Federal Agency for Civic Education the award is given since 2011 to productions with an outstanding aesthetic and political approach.



The film does not only show the rallying cries and xenophobic hostility, but also the loss of orientation and insecurity by the protagonist's attempt to win over his younger brother's support. The fifteen adolescent members of the Grosse Klappe jury were captured by BLACK SHEEP's aesthetic concept that communicates a Europe-wide controversial problem to young people: "The film succeeds in presenting a social problem on a personal narrative level and thereby opens a new perspective on widely known issues: conflicts about religion, racism and xenophobia. The pictures of a nationalistic demonstration are afflicting and show the threat that xenophobic declarations pose." According to the jury this is "a clear anti-hatred statement". Christian Cerami has recently graduated from the Westminster Film School, BLACK SHEEP is his directorial debut.

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the doxs! festival for children & youth documentaries (Duisburg, Germany), [www.do-xs.de](http://www.do-xs.de).



BLACK SHEEP, UK, 2015, 16'. Director & script: Christian Cerami, Director of photography: Simon Plunkett, Editing: Samuel L. Haskell, Sound: Victoria Harris, Production: University of Westminster Distribution: Christian Cerami.

Contact:  
[christian.cerami@gmail.com](mailto:christian.cerami@gmail.com),  
[www.christiancerami.com](http://www.christiancerami.com).

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## Morten on the Ships of Fools



10 years old Morten, fragile and dreamy, lives in a small harbor town. His father, a captain sailing the seven seas on his ship, The Salamander, is his only family. Aunt Anna, a strict ballet-teacher, is not exactly a sweet surrogate mother. Morten bides his time playing the captain of a toy boat, collecting insects as crew members serving under his command. Until one day the unbelievable happens: Morten finds himself shrunk to the size of an insect. Being a captain isn't easy when the crew doesn't accept your authority. Locked up in the hold of his ship, foul weather is coming and Morten is the only one who can save the ship. Because... sometimes you need to be shrunk in order to grow up. MORTEN ON THE SHIP OF FOOLS is a whimsical piece of animation on the edge of reality and imagination, introducing caterpillars, butterflies and grasshoppers, but

fitting perfectly in the rich and variegated Estonian animation tradition.

Director Kaspar Jancis, who was involved in every stage of the art direction and puppet design, came to present his animated feature in a Work in Progress session during the Visegrad Animation Forum in Trebon (Czech Republic). "Despite of its dislocation, the story has a classical structure, built around the saving of the heroine and the principle of the final combat. Further clichés will be avoided through the use of humour and irony" Jancis says.

The first draft and the creation of the puppets was done in Estonia by the Nukufilm Studios. Located in an old factory, with ateliers for design and developing props and puppets, a creative crew worked a whole year to create the sets, while 3 animators completed 50% of the animation. The scenes from the fantasy world are done in Ireland (involving the green screen work for Telegael). Grid VFX (Belgium) took care of the water, that is needed in large parts of this 'adventure at sea'. The other UK co-production partner was Calon. The entirely Irish voice cast (including Brendan Gleeson with a West-Dublin accent) adds to the juicy tone of the dialogue. 'Estonian 'easygoingness' with a flair of Irish grotesque,' sounds like a recipe that could work brilliantly.

The setting of MORTEN ON THE SHIP OF FOOLS provoked interesting challenges. Jancis: "Some of the action takes place on ceilings, walls and floors, so the perspective will be rather aberrant from the usual horizontal-vertical paradigm, and we mix hu-



man beings and insects into strange hybrid creatures. The bugs are as big as Morten and frighteningly resemble adults from his 'real' world. Another visual challenge was the awful big amount of water involved. The movement of water is difficult to visualise. For water close-ups, we used live action visuals, for water seen from a distance, we used CGI, often combining both in one picture."

For a €6,5 million budget, Nukufilm Studios will deliver an odd and funny feature stop motion adventure (80') for a family audience (5+). Completing MORTEN ON THE SHIP OF FOOLS is scheduled for the end of 2017, to release the film in English and Estonian version in 2018. (GH)

More info: [www.nukufilm.ee](http://www.nukufilm.ee), Contact: [nukufilm@nukufilm.ee](mailto:nukufilm@nukufilm.ee), Kerdi Oengo: [kerdi@nukufilm.ee](mailto:kerdi@nukufilm.ee)

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# Oddsockeaters

In October 2016 the animated film **ODDSOCKEATERS**, based on a series of bestselling books by Pavel Šrut, was released in Czech cinemas. Odsockeaters are small invisible creatures, responsible for socks that go missing when we only have one left from a pair - the odd sock. They eat socks, but only one from each pair! Since many people might have their own oddsockeaters at home, it's time to take a closer look at these funny and visually attractive little chaps.

On The film depicts the adventures of a young oddsockeater named Hugo. The life of his grandfather is nearing its end and Hugo must overcome his fears, leave the apartment where they live and seek out his uncle. He draws courage from the good manners that grandpa taught him and from the oddsockeaters' ten commandments. Until he breaks two basic oddsockeater rules: 'Never take the entire pair' and 'Stick close to people, but not too close'.

Director and co-author Galina Miklínová: "We started working on the project already in 2011, setting ourselves the highest standards. Only making the animatic took us 2 years and at least 12 people were involved. The result almost looked like a live action film." It was vital to first develop the figures of the oddsockeaters as a new type of creature. Their movements and lip-synch in particular needed



to be tested. "Their physiognomy is different from humans and the fact that their mouth and nose are combined into one, significantly affects their facial expressions."

Galina Miklínová also illustrated the books by Pavel Šrut. "It wasn't an easy job to transfer books with human characters, coyotes and the notorious oddsockeaters into a film. What about creating 1500 hand-painted socks? We tried 3D, we tried puppets, but then found a format in which everything could come together. Opting for computer animation was a logical route to take. CGI technology allowed us to maintain the delicate balance between credibility (realism) and fiction and was a fantastic tool for creating the physical form of the oddsockeaters. Odsockeaters are compiled from various textiles and CGI allowing them to be stretched, made transparent, twisted and twirled etc... As creator of the original (illustrated) oddsockeaters as a 'species', I was keen to retain the artistic objective, to draw by hand all the objects to be modelled and covered with specially prepared textures. We've put aquarel-

le textures on paper and used that as a background for drawings. Thus avoiding the artificial CGI look by giving objects and figures a sense of authenticity."

ODDSOCKEATERS is a Total HelpArt production (with Czech Television and Alkay Animation Studio as co-producers). Producer Ondřej Trojan: "It was nearly impossible to predict how the film market will look like in 2016 when we entered the project in 2011, but I believed then and I believe now that romantic and adventurous souls will find their way into cinemas, not just watch the film alone on TVs, computers or smartphones." International sales are handled by LevelK. (GH)

More info about ODSOCKEATERS: <http://www.levelk.dk/films/oddsockeaters/3631> or [www.tha.cz](http://www.tha.cz). Sales: Tine Klint, [tine.klint@levelk.dk](mailto:tine.klint@levelk.dk); Derek Lui, [derek@levelk.dk](mailto:derek@levelk.dk)  
Festivals: Niklas Teng, [niklas@levelk.dk](mailto:niklas@levelk.dk)

→ watch trailer

# Sigrid Klausmann about 'Not without us'

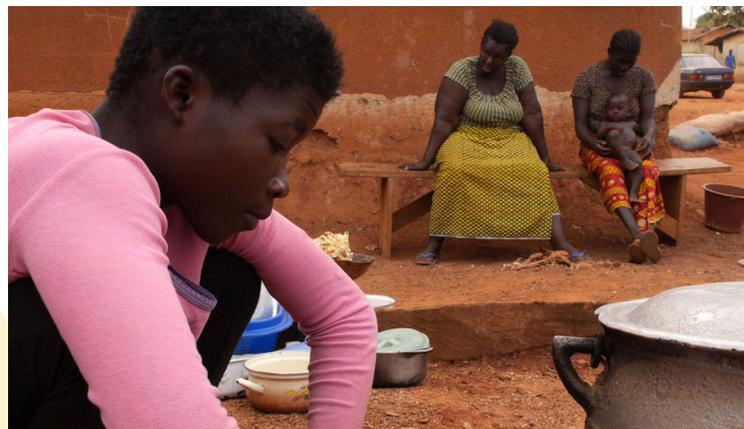
## "Intimate conversations don't come easily"

In the feature length documentary **NOT WITHOUT US** Sigrid Klausmann and her team of directors follow 16 children on their way to school and show the efforts they make every day to get access to education. Like Sanjana, from an Indian region where 'girls going to school' is considered useless, or Vincent from Austria skiing down from a mountain top cabin to the school in the valley, or Alphonsine from the Ivory Coast, who comes to school to work but isn't allowed to attend classes. **Sigrid Klausmann: "On their way to school children from different countries and backgrounds share with us their dreams and ambitions, their personal view on society. Throughout the film you'll find out how different their situation is, but how similar their longings are."**

Sigrid Klausmann meets her young audience after a school screening, organised by the doxs! festival (where the

film was nominated for an ECFA Docu Award), and starts her Q&A with a question: How do you all go to school? Walking? By bus? By bicycle perhaps? A surprisingly large amount of children is dropped every day at the school gate by their parents. Quite a contrast with the kids in **NOT WITHOUT US**: "I've met children living so isolated they had to be brought by helicopter. Or kids that had to walk to school for two days, and then stayed there for several months."

"When selecting children for this movie, we looked for those following a particular route to school, who were not afraid to talk in front of the camera and who had enough self-confidence to tackle all sorts of topics. Basically I'm sure all children have an interesting story to tell, so I had to go by some criteria, and by gut feeling. We selected 16 children from 15 countries – I decided to keep two kids from Suisse on board as I found their stories equally special. That's why we follow both Rebekka, who is blind and



finds her way to school independently along crossroads and underpasses, and Enjo, a young philosopher feeling a deep connection with the nature in his home region. We even included one girl who doesn't go to school: Alphonsine is an orphan, living with her grandmother, who decided that her grandchildren shouldn't go to school ("you wouldn't understand a thing anyway") but have to work and earn a living."

"**NOT WITHOUT US** has its roots in a project called '199 Little Heroes' ([www.199littleheroes.com](http://www.199littleheroes.com)), aiming to portray one child in every country in the world. Together with me, the project was created and supported by

producers Walter Sittler (Schneegans Productions) and Gerhard Schmidt (Gemini Film). So far we did 27 children on 5 continents. I'm supervising this project (and filmed some portraits) but I have several directors working with me: Lina Luzyte, Insa Onken, Ali Kareem and Ariane Kessissoglou. Editing the episodes took us a whole year. For the shooting of an episode we schedule one or two weeks: research, preparations, interviewing,... Each individual child needs to be approached in its own way. To let them open up in front of the camera, you have to create a certain trust. We had one child who didn't speak freely, but then the next day simply couldn't stop talking. We tried to keep crews



as small as possible – intimate conversations don't come easily when you're surrounded by a 20-headed film crew. Usually there was just the director, a DOP, a sound technician, a translator, a driver and sometimes a security agent."

"I started my career as a teacher, then became a choreographer, and only relatively late found my way into making documentaries. In all my former occupations I've always been working with young people. Even as a choreographer, I worked with youngsters trying to tell their story through dancing. But the idea to film kids on their way to school originally came from my husband and producer Walter Sittler. I soon found out the reality was even more thrilling than the idea. Because the true excitement was in finding out: what do these children have to tell? How do they look

at the world? How do they experience their environment? We wanted to give a voice to the children of the world, not by using a grown-up's voice over. Children do have an insight in the world and at that age they're attentive observers. I find it important they can share their thoughts directly with peers in the audience. Every child has the right to make his or her voice heard, also the ones who are sick, like the HIV positive Luniko from South-Africa, or those who feel excluded. Every child is a film in itself." "The exotic locations seldom brought us in risky situations. The episode in Iraq was shot by colleague Ali Kareem, who grew up there. As he's trying to make a film with children, Ali is in close contact with local youngsters. Jafer played a role in his award-winning short film, and now he's starring in our episode. I shot Luniko's story in the South-African



township Khayelitsha, where extra security was needed. Not just to secure ourselves, but our equipment. Recently we shot an episode in Mexico City, and the company renting out equipment, demanded we should always be escorted by guards."

"NOT WITHOUT US brought us to some of the poorest countries in the world. It isn't a surprise that some of those portrayed asked us for a kind of support. When working with poor families, they received a fixed sum of money. And every child participating, received a gift. There were children asking for a new school bag or school uniform, which we bought them. You feel that urge also with the audience: we want to help, right now! Like after one screening, a woman immediately wanted to organise fundraising to help the children all together, all 16 of them. But that was not

the film's intention. We're telling these children's stories, hoping they'll be heard by bodies that can provide profound assistance. Maybe Perla from Iceland was resuming our intentions perfectly: 'All children want to have someone they can trust, who helps them in life, a family or even friends who love them and care about them like parents do. Nothing is more important than that.'"

–  
Gert Hermans

→ watch trailer

On 4 November, Sigrid Klausmann took part in a panel discussion, organised by the Film'on Children's Film Festival (Brussels), about the responsibilities of documentary directors working with young people. Read the full report [here](#).



*New European films for children or young people which are ready to be discovered for your programmes. More information and more films can be found at [www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films](http://www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films). Producers, distributors and sales agents are kindly invited to inform us of their new releases.*

## Ballerina



### Animation, France, 2016

Director: Eric Summer & Eric Warin  
 Prod.: Quad Films, Caramel Films, Gaumont  
 World Sales: Gaumont S.A., France  
 Phone: ++33-1-464-320-60  
[info@gaumont.com](mailto:info@gaumont.com)  
[www.gaumont.net](http://www.gaumont.net)

## Behind the Blue Door



### Feature, Poland, 2016

Directors: Mariusz Palej  
 Production: TFP, Polsat, Fremantle Media.  
 World Sales: TFP Sp., Poland  
 Phone: ++48-22-810-92-79  
[biuro@t-f-p.pl](mailto:biuro@t-f-p.pl)  
 Trailer: [www.t-f-p.pl](http://www.t-f-p.pl)

## Butterfly Kisses

### Feature, UK, 2017

Director: Rafael Kapelinski  
 Prod. & World Sales: Blue Shadows Films, UK  
 Phone: ++44-20-37-73-39-93  
[info@blueshadowsfilms.com](mailto:info@blueshadowsfilms.com)  
[www.blueshadowsfilms.com](http://www.blueshadowsfilms.com)

## The Day, My Father Became a Bush



### Feature, The Netherlands & Belgium & Croatia, 2016

Director: Nicole van Kilsdonk  
 Prod.: Lemming Film, Minds Meet, A Private View

World Sales: Beta Cinema, Germany  
 Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80  
[beta@betacinema.com](mailto:beta@betacinema.com)  
[www.betacinema.com](http://www.betacinema.com)

## The Erlprince



### Feature, Poland, 2016

Director: Kuba Czekaj  
 Prod.: Studio Munka, Telewizja Polska, Odra Film  
 World Sales: Studio Munka, Poland  
 Phone: ++48-22-556-54-70  
[studiomunka@sfp.org.pl](mailto:studiomunka@sfp.org.pl)  
[www.studiomunka.pl](http://www.studiomunka.pl)

## Good Boy

### Feature, Russia, 2016

Director: Oxana Karas  
 Prod. & World Sales: 2D Celluloid, Russia  
 Phone: ++7-495-741-90-90  
[office@2dfilms.ru](mailto:office@2dfilms.ru)  
[www.2dfilms.ru](http://www.2dfilms.ru)

## Heartstone

### Feature, Denmark & Iceland, 2016

Director: Gudmundur A. Gudmundsson



Prod.: SF Film Production, Join Motion Pictures  
 World Sales: Films Boutique, Germany  
 Phone: ++49-30-695-378-50  
[info@filmsboutique.com](mailto:info@filmsboutique.com)  
[www.filmsboutique.com](http://www.filmsboutique.com)

## The Legend of Timm Thaler or The Boy Who Sold His Laughter



### Feature, Germany, 2017

Director: Andreas Dresen  
 Prod.: Constantin Film, Rolize, ZDF  
 World Sales: Beta Cinema, Germany  
 Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80  
[beta@betacinema.com](mailto:beta@betacinema.com)  
[www.betacinema.com](http://www.betacinema.com)



## Mountain Miracle – An Unexpected Friendship



Feature, Germany & Italy, 2017

Director: Tobias Wiemann  
 Prod.: Lieblingsfilm, Helios Sustainable Films, RBB  
 World Sales: Lieblingsfilm, Germany  
 Phone: ++49-89-890-578-30

[office@lieblingsfilm.biz](mailto:office@lieblingsfilm.biz)  
[www.lieblingsfilm.biz](http://www.lieblingsfilm.biz)

## The Polar Boy



Feature, Estonia, 2016

Director: Anu Aun  
 Prod. & World Sales: Luxfilm, Estonia  
 Phone: ++372-52-04-780

[luxfilm@luxfilm.ee](mailto:luxfilm@luxfilm.ee)  
[www.luxfilm.ee](http://www.luxfilm.ee)

## My First Highway

Feature, Belgium & The Netherlands, 2016

Director: Kevin Meul  
 Prod.: CTM Films, Fobic Films  
 World Sales: Premium Films, France  
 Phone: ++33-1-42-77-06-39

[contact@premium-films.com](mailto:contact@premium-films.com)  
[www.premium-films.com](http://www.premium-films.com)

## Rabbit School – Guardians of the Golden Egg



Animation, Germany, 2017

Director: Ute von Münchow-Pohl  
 Prod.: Akkord Film  
 World Sales: Sola Media, Germany  
 Phone: ++49-711-479-36-66

[post@sola-media.net](mailto:post@sola-media.net)  
[www.sola-media.com](http://www.sola-media.com)

## Little Wing

Feature, Finland, 2016

Director: Selma Vilhunen  
 Prod. & World Sales: Making Movies, Finland

Phone: ++358-9-621-38-28

[mamo@mamo.fi](mailto:mamo@mamo.fi)

[www.mamo.fi](http://www.mamo.fi)

## Richard the Stork



Animation, Germany, Belgium & Norway, 2017

Director: Toby Genkel & Reza Memari  
 Production: Memari und Knudsen & Streuber Medienmanufaktur, Ulysses, Walking the Dog

World Sales: Global Screen, Germany  
 Phone: +49-89-244-12-95-500

[info@globalscreen.de](mailto:info@globalscreen.de)  
[www.globalscreen.de](http://www.globalscreen.de)

## Trollie: Home, Sweet Home / Trollie: The Great Rescue

Features, The Netherlands, 2016

Director: Gert Embrechts  
 Production: Ciné Cri De Coeur, Johan Nijenhuis & Co, Mollywood  
 World Sales: Attraction Distribution, Canada

Phone: ++1-514-846-12-22  
[info@attractiondistribution.ca](mailto:info@attractiondistribution.ca)  
[www.attractiondistribution.ca](http://www.attractiondistribution.ca)

## Storm – Letters of Fire



Feature, The Netherlands, 2017

Director: Dennis Bots  
 Prod.: Phanta Vision, Bulletproof Cupid, Iris Productions,...

World Sales: Phanta Vision, The Netherlands

Phone: ++31-20-62-60-255

[info@phantavision.com](mailto:info@phantavision.com)  
[www.phantavision.com](http://www.phantavision.com)

More information on all these films you will find on our website:

[www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films](http://www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films)

# Kinder- und Jugendfilmkorrespondenz: The last One

At the end of 2014 Christel and Hans Strobel handed over the editorship of the 'Kinder- und Jugendfilmkorrespondenz' (KJK), a German magazine reporting about the world of children's film which they founded in 1980, to the 'Filmdienst' magazine, in which the mission was forged ahead as a quarterly supplement. After eight editions however, the cooperation ended again due to a Filmdienst restructuring. The edition published in November 2016 appeared to be the last one. Thus, the relaunch of KJK came to a sudden end. Since 1 January 2017, the rights to the name Kinder- und Jugendfilmkorrespondenz have returned to the original founder Christel Strobel.

Over the course of the last eight editions, we have 'reworked' the KJK, shifting the focus from children's film news towards a magazine about the broad children and youth film scene. In the German-speaking area I'm not aware of any other print magazine concentrating so vigorously on this specific field, providing it with an equally critical, constructive, entertaining and



stimulating platform. Similar websites or blogs are equally hard to find. Kinderfilmwelt.de (directly addressing the <12 target group, edited by the German Children & Youth Film Centre) and the private children's film blog by Rochus Wolff (kinderfilmblog.de) are well-known exceptions.

The (at least temporary) loss of a relevant publication, providing a forum for children and youth films with a main-

stream or a more arthouse approach, is utterly regrettable. While the 'besondere Kinderfilm' funding initiative in Germany is actually causing a substantial change, and children's film is getting a new relevance in the public perception, the sector loses a journalistic 'megaphone' to go with this development. Above all, the KJK offered space to a market segment, which is otherwise often left out entirely or - still - characterised by quite old-fashioned expectations on 'good children's films'. A magazine like the KJK for me still had a great relevance, because it gave visibility to the very different young audience films available on the market, at the same time evaluating and classifying them. That even 'small' German or international productions could receive a better appreciation and attract more attention was a nice side effect.

With the section „What is children's film?“ we tried to examine what children's films should or could be and to express resentment about grievances. As varied as the articles of the guest authors were, above all they highligh-

ted how important it is to take a young audience serious, to entrust them with new, exciting and challenging films – a promise too often not fulfilled. In this way, these articles further carried out the 'journalistic spirit' of Christel and Hans Strobel.

Probably no other magazine can be found today that was running for more than 30 years on a remarkable personal commitment like 'the Stobels' had. It will require a joint effort and a political backbone to launch a new, similar specialised publication. While such a magazine for the children and youth film scene is still as important as ever.

–  
Stefan Stiletto  
(KJK Editor from 2015 – 2016)

## In memoriam Hans Strobel



Copyright: Schlingel filmfestival Chemnitz

On the night of 24th December 2016 Hans Strobel passed away, only a few days before his 79th birthday. Just one day earlier, together with his wife Christel, he attended the film concert 'Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella', with their son Frank conducting the philharmonic orchestra.

Together, Hans and Christel Strobel were the inspirers of modern children's cinema in Germany, which was an abrupt change after the nostalgic fairy-tales of the 1950s, previously dominating the bare children's film landscape. They directed the Kinderfilmfest München for 22 years and with their unique Kinder- und Jugendfilmkorrespondenz magazine, they underlined their mission and quickly found like-minded souls nation-wide.

In the last few years Hans Strobel was increasingly detained by Parkinson's disease. He, who had so much to tell us, could communicate less and less with his beloved ones. But what we will all keep in mind, is his tireless commitment.

(based on a text published by the former KJK editors)

### SHORT FILM EXPERT

One thing missing from your ECFA Journal was always a regular update on the field of short films for a young audience. Soon this will no longer be the case. The next edition (May 2017) will launch the 'Short Cut' column, in which ECFA's expert member 'Mo & Friese' (as a part of the Hamburg Kurzfilmmagetur) will shine its light on the latest short film trends and highlights. ECFA is proudly looking forward to this new cooperation, that will further add to the Journal's quality.

## MO & FRIESE

## Sannette Naeyé looking back

Now that I'm about to leave Cinekid, ECFA asked me to look back upon three specific moments, while at the same time share some advice for the future. First let me say: I'm giving up a great job for a leap into the great unknown. 'Retirement,' people asked? Please no! Anyway, if I'll ever reach that age, you can bet that the Dutch government will immediately raise the minimum retirement age by a few more years.

I've worked for a long time for Cinekid, but before Cinekid I held a few other interesting jobs. As head of 'Art & Culture' for a big Dutch public broadcaster, I learned everything about how to work within tight budgets. Every day I needed to put my signature on stacks of budgets and bills submitted to me for various aspects of production. That's where I learned: don't put your trust blindly in the combination 'man & computer', keep your head cool, trust your intuition. Even when budgets at first sight look trustworthy, realize that the logic within a budget sometimes gets lost. If you find something that you can't immediately explain, listen to your personal alarm bell. Trusting my own intuition has saved me from making mistakes that could have cost thousands of Euros. (tip 1)



I was also part of an editorial team for a small broadcaster. As 'Head Film Department', I was responsible for the acquisition of all genres of programming, which included documentary films. In those days, some of these films had an exceptional emotional impact. I experienced first-hand to hear the telephone lines 'explode' the moment we started broadcasting. And the strange preliminary silence, when our team of professionals was waiting to act, literally, as help desk. This experience taught me that emotions are universal. That hurt and sadness do not fade away and continue to live on in many different forms. That the personal and the political go hand in hand. And that, when working in media, to bend with the wind and keeping your back straight are equally important qualities. In the end, the only thing you can hold on to, is your own moral compass.

It's the reason, I never watched horror films. I don't want to become numb, I want to keep my judgement sharp. Violence – physical and emotional - and especially domestic violence has a tremendous impact on children (this knowledge guided me in my role for the advisory board of the Dutch Institute for Classification of Audio-visual Media). As programmer for a festival where children watch films 'under guidance', I maintained the same liberal criteria concerning violence as we apply towards portraying intimacy: functional nudity is accepted, just like functional scary emotions and violence. Thinking that you can keep children 'safe', by keeping these away, does not give them the skills to learn how to deal with it. (tip 2).

In the before mentioned job as 'Head Film Department', I also committed a cardinal sin. At the time, quality series for a youth audience were rare. I acquired films and re-edited them into three-episode series. As I had been trained as a camera director, and had been making my own programs, I knew about the importance of 'establishing shots', the scenes needed to set the context of a story. In my opinion, those shots were almost always too long in the films I had acquired. So I recklessly shortened those opening scenes. That's how I learned about the power of a strong opening scene and story motif (tip 3).

For instance, as in:

1. THE THREE ROBBERS (2007): At the opening credits, I already roared with laughter.
2. TWO TIMES IDA (1989): Ida drives into the water but is sent back when she arrives at heaven's gate.
3. KIRIKOU AND THE SORCERESS (1998): Kirikou literally comes rolling out of his mother's lap into the story.

So rather than last words, for me, the first words, the first images will guide my future work.

After nearly 20 years I will enjoy a summer without festival deadlines. I hope to get connected to some beautiful projects. As an e-mail address I didn't choose '.com' or '.eu', but an address that I hope will reflect my ongoing thirst for knowledge:

[sannette@naeye.info](mailto:sannette@naeye.info).

–

Sannette Naeyé



# Eszter Vuojala looking back

I've been working for the Oulu International Children's Film Festival since 1990, the last 10 years as festival director, and now it is time to pass on the festival into the hands of the next generation: new festival director Anna Asplund, and Mika Anttolainen as festival coordinator. Looking back upon my beautiful career, these are three highlights I've selected.

## 1. Most glamorous moment

When the festival celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2011, the then president of Finland Tarja Halonen invited me to the Presidential Palace in Helsinki for the Independence Day reception. That was not only a glamorous party but also a public tribute to our festival, as the event was screened live on national TV.

## 2. Most exciting moment

A yearly highlight was the children's jury making its decision about the 'Star Boy Award', the best film in the children's competition. The members of the jury gathered – no adults around, as I also left the place. Sitting in my room I wondered what film could be the winner. Once the decision was made, we started

discussing the films together, with the youngsters getting excited and enthusiastic about all the films and about the overall experience they had during one week.

## 3. Most touching moment

The screening of the Finnish film STORMHEART ('Myrsky') in 2008. There was a simultaneous sign language screening for disabled children (which we organise every year). The film was about the friendship between a little girl and a huge Caucasian Shepherd dog. The director was invited, but too busy. Then I got an idea and contacted the local Kennel Club. After the screening I went on stage with a 50 kg gigantic Caucasian Shepherd dog (which was not the one from the movie, but a look-alike indeed). The applause was huge and children queued up in their wheelchairs for a hug with the dog and a selfie.

Finally it is time to thank everybody who has cooperated with me over the last 26 years. If anything, festival work is teamwork. I might have troubled you, dear ECFA Members, many times for contact information and all kinds of other help. Thank you for having been patient and cooperative!

I loved my job. It was not only fascinating, but also extremely important. Why? Now a new generation is born that interacts with multiple screens and technology before they are even verbal. In this complex and alienated technocratic world of them/us, our role is to guide children towards the world of

arts, of fantasy and of righteous values. It is important to encourage them in their natural creativity, and in staying morally correct and humane.

–  
Eszter Vuojala  
[evuojala@gmail.com](mailto:evuojala@gmail.com)



## Cloudboy - On the set

### Meikeminne Clinckspoor under the spell of Scandinavian children's film

This summer shy Belgian city boy Niilas should - against his will - visit his biological mother he barely knows. She lives high up North, among the Sami reindeer shepherds in Lapland. Abashed, Niilas crawls into his shell, where only his half-sister Sunna carefully can come to find him. One day a female reindeer goes missing. Niilas identifies with the lonesome calf abandoned by his mother and dedicates himself wholeheartedly to the search for the missing animal. Meanwhile a giant moose keeps unexpectedly crossing his path. For Niilas, this might just become the most exciting summer ever.

Meikeminne Clinckspoor alternately worked in Belgium and The Netherlands on her feature film debut CLOUDBOY until the project found shelter with Flemish producer Bulletproof Cupid, who is striving for a stronger profile in the children's film field (with yet the film BINTI in the pipeline). Meikeminne is fascinated by the Scan-

dinavian youth films that made such a big impression on her as a child. As a student she already showed her great passion for this tradition, through the shorts THE WISHING TREE and KI. That love she equally carries out in CLOUDBOY closely resembling a classic Nordic youth film: standing close to nature and respecting the spontaneous, sincere childhood. CLOUDBOY is an international co-production, with Sweden, Norway and The Netherlands on board. The shooting in the North is finished („In Scandinavia we had to react very flexibly to all conceivable weather conditions“) and today, during one of the last days of filming, the crew stays close to home: at the harbour-side, where Niilas meets a group of free runners.

### Under the blazing sun

Daan Roofthoof, playing Niilas, appears to be in just about every scene of the movie. Yesterday he got a diving course and had fun in a water tank, filming a few underwater scenes. Today under the blazing sun, he's



hanging on a rope, jumping from one container to another. His steep black hair has turned wild, flaming and curly. CLOUDBOY is his feature debut. In the cast he is joined by actors from Belgium (Geert Van Rampelberg), Sweden (Sara Sommerfeld, BECK, WINGS OF GLASS), Norway (Mikkel Gaup, OFELAS, BREAKING THE WAVES) and young Sami actors playing Niilas' half-brother and sister.

The group of free runners play a particular role in the story. After a summer on the Swedish countryside they represent the attraction of the city,

providing an energetic counterbalance for the subdued scenes in Swedish forests. They'll help the introverted Niilas to 'come back home', finding a group of friends to hang out with. But on the set such a gang of young warriors is difficult to keep in check. Free runners can't sit still - that's in their nature! The piles of wood, concrete and car wrecks scattered strategically across the set, look so inviting. Free runner coach Nicolas explains some techniques and stirs up the extras with pep talk: „The pace is good, that flow is excellent!“ Meikeminne divi-





des her time between crew and young actors, that she constantly monitors. She has her own ideas about how to get the best out of them. During the entire shooting period, the international crew has delivered excellent work and did everything to make life as easy as possible for a debuting director. But the whole project is driven by Meikeminne's strong vision.

### Cinema at the gym

A father observes with satisfaction how his son is embraced by a group of free runners. The role of affable father figure fits popular Belgian ac-

tor Geert Van Rampelberg like a glove. „Although it's a minor role, I had rehearsals with Daan and Meikeminne, as playing a father-son relationship isn't obvious. Certainly not such a 'little too close' father-son bond. All these years for his son he has fulfilled both the paternal and maternal role, in a very protective position. In such situation, you can easily grow too close together. Now the time has come for Niilas to get to know his mother, to 'stand on his own feet and discover himself'. A beautiful key-moment in the life of father and son. A friction is growing between them, which adds to the interesting evolution of the story.

But the film totally focusses on Niilas, I'm only there to co-start up the storyline."

### How good are you as free runner?

Van Rampelberg: "On a 0-10 scale I'd give myself a decent 2!"

### What motivated you to agree to this film?

Van Rampelberg: "Engaging in a project like this I do purely out of love for children's film. As teenager I was member of the film club, organising screenings at our school. Every year when choosing films from a catalogue, there were fiery discussions and I still remember the excitement. On Friday evening the school gym was 'pimped' into a cinema. Seeing a movie there was awesome. That's where the seed of my love for cinema was sown. When reading a script like CLOUDBOY, a collaboration nota bene with Scandinavia, I'm immediately convinced. Moreover, I find it amazing that a director like Meikeminne wants to focus solely on youth film, because it's her choice and her passion. Once she was fed this same enthusiasm and hunger for cinema, causing a kind of wonder that creeps into your body, into your cells. I find it beautiful that she now wants to pass this feeling to



a next generation."

CLOUDBOY will première in the JEFF youth film festival (Antwerp / Bruges) and will go in domestic distribution in April.

International sales: New Europe Film Sales, Jan Naszewski, [jan@neweuropefilmsales.com](mailto:jan@neweuropefilmsales.com)

Festival contact: Ewa Bojanowska, [festivals@neweuropefilmsales.com](mailto:festivals@neweuropefilmsales.com)

—  
Gert Hermans

# Kids Regio

## New season of industry events

**In 2017 KIDS Regio will run in close collaboration with The Financing Forum for Kids Content its two cornerstone business events: the KIDS Regio Berlinale Meeting Point on 11 February and The Opening Industry Day during The Financing Forum for Kids Content in Malmö on 14 March, thus providing ground for professional exchange between creatives working within the children's screen.**

This year's KIDS Regio Berlinale Meeting Point will look at inspiring projects and engaging strategies, entailed in the changing viewing habits of the young audience. Four speakers from different European traditions will present their ideas, reflecting on this year's key question: How to build up and motivate a young audience for European Independent Cinema? Together with moderator Füsun Erikson, film consultant and former director of the Buster Festival (Copenhagen), they will discuss perspectives on audience engagement and how those are implemented within their own strategies. Together they'll investigate up to what extent an engagement strategy is already possible / necessary in the development stage of a film and whether creative professionals should rethink their policies.

Speakers in this session, explaining their strategies to connect with their (young) audience will be:

- Alison Norrington, writer, producer & Chief Creative Director of storycentral, London, UK
- Maciej Jakubczyk, Head of Education at the New Horizons Association, Director of the Kino Dziecie Film Festival and the Kids Film Pro writer's Lab, Warsaw, Poland
- Hannah Higginson, Engagement Producer at Watershed, a cultural cinema and centre for digital creativity, Bristol, UK
- Harro van Staverden, producer at Phanta Basta!, The Netherlands, recently working on STORM – LETTERS OF FIRE

More info: [www.kids-regio.org/home](http://www.kids-regio.org/home)

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The Opening Industry Day on 14 March during The Financing Forum for Kids Content will continue unfolding successful case studies on e.g. how to build a 360 degree brand for pre-schoolers (Gigglebug, Finland), how to sell a children's film to 100 countries (RICHARD THE STORK, Norway/Germany) and how to create a VoD platform designed particularly for small children (Hopster, UK). You get first hand insight in the choices this generation of teens makes when they're invited to take over the work process part (Fremtidsfabrik, DK), you'll be introduced to the universes of reclaimed Step-In-Books (DK) as well as to the poetic, environmentally clever VR installation Treehugger (UK).



*Richard the Stork*

The objective of The Opening Industry Day is to support and improve the development, production, and distribution of media content for children by recognising the specifics of the young audience.

The Financing Forum for Kids Content (14-16 March) is an annual three day co-production forum for children's screen media in Malmö, Sweden. Around 25 projects in development are pitched for European decision makers from broadcasters such as YLE, DR, NRK, SVT, Canal +, France Television, BBC, NDR etc. and experts from e.g. the Nordic film institutes as well as around 150 producers and distributors.

–

**Viola Gabrielli**

Register [here](#).

More info: [www.thefinancingforum.com](http://www.thefinancingforum.com)



## SACCF

### New kid on the block

**India is arguably the world's largest market for children's content. 22 kids channels vie for the attention of over 350 million children. But since most households in India have only a single screen, only 15 to 30% of children's viewing time is spent on kids' networks. The rest of the time is spent in collective family consumption of general entertainment or news channels. Children's networks attract only 4.5% of the total TV advertising money. There is no public service or government run channel for kids. So even though demographically they are the largest block of potential consumers, the investment in children's channels is comparatively miniscule. This impacts the programming which focuses on content laden with slapstick humour, action and unapologetic consumerism.**

But the story is about to change with the arrival of the new kid on the block – VOD!

India is already home to around 460 million internet users, by 2020 this number is expected to increase to 730 million. With Netflix and Amazon Prime Video opening their account in India last year, VOD has finally entered the consciousness of the Indian digital consumer.

Currently monetisation from VOD is a challenge, primarily due to internet reach and bandwidth – the connection speed is not sufficient and the data costs are prohibitive. Most Indians are wary of switching to VOD because of this, even with films currently being offered at say 40 cents per view or 7,5 USD a year. Indians are known to be price-sensitive. The subscriber base is therefore limited to tech savvy urban users. But this small section of potential subscribers is forecasted to expand to 105 million within the next three years.

Right after Bollywood film, music and cricket, kids' segment is expected to grow the most. While Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar and Hooq have children's sections, last year also saw the launch of numerous dedicated platforms. Since most companies in this space are eyeing the mass market, their programming selection is similar to the traditional Indian kids' television networks, presenting only content with mass appeal. However the individual nature of consumption of VOD will soon create space for content with a more niche appeal. With more and more parents becoming conscious of alternative content for children, this market is set to grow. This presents an opportunity for European children's films which have till now been viewed in India only at children's film festivals.

Last year the leading Direct to Home platform –Tata Sky – launched a curated pop-up freemium channel to help audiences discover meaningful children's films. Programmed and acquired by Monica Wahli (author of this article), the package of 45 films in-



cluded GIRAFFADA, MOTHER I LOVE YOU, BIRDS OF PASSAGE, KAUWBOY, THE SECRET OF KELLS, ELANOR'S SECRET and many Studio Ghibli films. In its five month run, the channel was subscribed by 2,6 million households. That is 65% of Tata Sky's subscriber households with children under 14 years.

Encouraged by this phenomenal response, Tata Sky has announced a permanent dedicated children's channel. We are looking for features and shorts appropriate for 8-10 year olds, primarily in English. Films that are challenging and nuanced can help children make sense of this upside-down world!

–  
Monica Wahli

If you have exciting titles to offer for the Indian territory, get in touch at the EFM through [monica@ccfsouthasia.org](mailto:monica@ccfsouthasia.org).

# TV bedtime stories and other Slovak animation

## The animation market in Slovakia

**Due to its size and resources, Slovakia has a rather limited amount of children's content in film and TV production. However, those few productions earn recognition, at least in Central Europe. Even being a small country, Slovakia is the birthplace of some good quality animated films for kids.**

Slovak filmmaking went through a rough period between the years 1993 and 2000, with the rise of capitalism and consequently, privatisation. Bratislava Film Studios were closed overnight and left to wreck, even if they were the only ones producing content for children at that time. Filmmaking rose (almost) from the dead with the establishment of the Slovak Audio-visual Fund in 2009.

Nowadays Slovak producers of children's content (shorts, feature-length and TV formats) have two main funding sources. The largest grants for children's film production are awarded by the Audio-visual Fund, based on the decisions of an expert committee. Their support for film and TV projects includes grants for development, production, distri-



*Mimi and Lisa*

bution, scholarships, and minority co-productions. With sub-programs for fiction films, documentaries and animated films.

The Slovak Fund is only 8 years young and for many producers productions for children could be an easy way to experiment and detect the best possible funding options. Children's content definitely deserves special protection measures in the current fight against the titans (feature fiction films for adult audiences). Even if content for children was from 2011-2014 one of the fund's priorities, the results of the funding didn't confirm this. In 2010 the content for kids was supported by 15% of all money granted by the fund, in 2011 it was only 4,8%, in 2012 (4%) even less. From then on, numbers fluctuated in 2013 (16%), 2014 (25% - wow!) and 2015 (only 12%). In the Audio-visual Fund's plans for 2017, no priority is given to content for children.

Another possible funding source is national broadcaster RTVS (Radio & Television Slovakia). Being the

only relevant additional source available, co-productions with the RTVS are in many cases essential for producers. The domestic TV series for children are but a handful of new animated programmes returning to RTVS, after a 20 years absence of original animated content.



*The Tots*

Since 2011 RTVS started to co-produce original TV bedtime stories, like the successful MIMI AND LISA by Katarína Kerekesová (Fool Moon) - in 2015 the second series was completed. A new TV bedtime series THE TOTS (Drobcí) by Vanda Raýmanová and Michal Struss (Objectif) was broadcasted by RTVS over last year's Christmas. THE TOTS are two little boys discovering the world through naive games, visually based on the successful short film WHO'S THERE by Vanda Raymanová. These two projects are representing Slovak TV's progressive policy. That's why we were happy to find out that THE TOTS have another 6 episodes in the making and Katarína Kerekesová is preparing a new series THE WEBSTERS, 13 animated episodes for children and





*The Websters*

parents about a family of spiders. THE WEBSTERS will be made on a €1 million budget, with 30-40% expected to be covered by Slovak TV. TV content for children is currently also produced by Jaroslav Baran (Animoline - his MR. TOTI series will be a Polish-Slovak co-production). Jaroslav Niňaj (Polygon Production) is working on GREEK MYTHS (Grécke báje) while Ivan Popovič (My Studio) continues his work on the cycle IF I ONLY HAD A SCREW LOOSE! (Mať tak o koliesko viac!), broadcasted in 2015.

However, there are no regular slots for independent short films for children. What a pity. Luckily we still have those original bedtime stories, as the only thing to cling on to, together with the animated feature HEART OF A TOWER (directed by Peter Budinský) that is currently in development.

With Vanda Raymanová, Slovak director and producer who just finished the first 7 episodes of THE TOTS, we found a 'voice from the floor' to comment: Vanda Raymanová: "It seems like we woke up from a long period of sleep. I see a positive trend in the de-

velopment of original Slovak material for children. I belong to a generation formed after the revolution (1989) and in those days we felt a strong urge to reject all animated content for children. As the result of a historical context: for decades all Slovak animated content produced by the state studios and national television had been solely dedicated to children. That's the reason why in post-revolutionary years in many former socialist countries, mainly artistic animated films for adults were produced by the new generation. However, after a while we returned to our roots and picked up again the artistic work for young people, as it has a strong psychological, cultural and social impact on our children and a bigger potential for distribution than arthouse cinema. Nowadays, thanks to a renewed interest from national broadcaster RTVS and the Slovak Audio-visual Fund, few producers get the chance to work intensively on high quality content. Unfortunately, still it is my opinion that we need a more personal interest from specific authors, as well as a consistent concept for a planned production of original content."

What is your experience as producer of Slovak TV series?

Raymanová: "Our biggest problem is the lack of models, and of experienced people understanding the technology of animation in the process of producing TV series. We are all in the front line. Like Peter Budinský's company Plutoon (see next page) producing HEART OF A TOWER, they'll be the first ones to deliver an animated feature for children made on professional terms. Or like us (with Kata Kerekešová), building the first animation studios,



*Heart of a Tower*

that are now co-producing with RTVS all those interesting series for children. What producers need mostly, is a strong passion for animation, and enthusiasm for the story's subject. We were, and still are enthusiastic. We're currently producing one episode every 4 months, which is probably the fastest pace of producing on our conditions and according to our demand for quality."

Good luck, Slovak producers!

–  
Eva Pa

## Good Slovak practice: BFILM & Studio Plutoon Friendship in the animation industry

**A small market, like the Slovak animation industry, has its advantages and disadvantages. The most positive aspect is that everybody in the business knows each other, and together you can develop the best possible creative environment. Like this special partnership between production company Bfilm ([www.bfilm.sk](http://www.bfilm.sk)) and animation studio Plutoon ([www.plutoon.sk](http://www.plutoon.sk)), working together in a close relationship.**

Production company Bfilm, based in Bratislava, works on the development and production of movies in all genres and formats. Bfilm has the ambition to help young authors in making their films and presenting them successfully, both in Slovakia and abroad. With their passion for animation and contemporary cinema, for Bfilm international collaboration is a natural way of working, supporting Slovak creators to succeed abroad and meanwhile embracing new perspectives for the Slovak industry.

Plutoon is an independent production company founded in 2013 by Pluto, a dog (!) and its animator and director Peter Budinsky. Starting his own pro-

# BFILM



duction company was just a logical next step after his successful work as freelancer on national and international animated shorts. Plutoon is now active in all stages of the filmmaking and animation process, mastering the entire scale of animation production. In its portfolio Plutoon has animated commercials for advertising companies, visual design for TV shows, special effects for commercial events, illustrations, compositing and storyboarding etc.

Both companies share the same main objective: producing challenging and unique films of artistic value for a broad audience, and for all dogs in the world! They're working together in different stages of animation, dramaturgy, scriptwriting and production. The first result (for children) of this mutual friendship will be HEART OF A TOWER, an animated feature for a family audience, directed by Peter Budinsky (see ECFA Journal #4 2016). Little boy Riki has to go far beyond the borders of gloomy everyday stereotypes, to find the magical world Yourland, where ravens act like humans, construction cranes walk like robots and metal machines rule the world. Riki vigorously has to enter this world to save it, and reveal the truth. The premiere is planned for 2020,

the estimated budget is €2,2 million.

The second result is the animated all-ages-documentary ONCE THERE WAS A SEA... (Joanna Kozuch), telling stories from the glittering bottom of the dying Aral Sea, that will also include interactive media.

Last but not least is CRISS-CROSS, a short animated film by Nina Turčanová, introducing children to a world of animal heroes. A world based on the same social principles that rule the human world: forest friends together experience love, joy, gratitude, as well as pride, shame or anger. An in the end, "a friend in need is a friend indeed," whether he has arms and legs, or paws and claws.

If you're interested in any of these projects, come to find Eva Pa for more information, [eva@bfilm.sk](mailto:eva@bfilm.sk).



*Once There was a Sea...*

# Teenage revelation: My First Highway

## Everything remained the same, but everything had changed

**Benjamin spends the holidays with his parents. On a Spanish campsite, Benjamin – a dreamy 16 years old – falls in love. His holiday sweetheart (whose name we never get to know), though beautiful and intriguing, is a wounded soul. While Benjamin has the time of his life, she drags him into an adventure that takes a dangerous turn. This summer will be engraved forever in Benjamin's memory: "Everything remained the same. But everything had changed." Belgian director Kevin Meul's feature debut is a beautiful coming-of-age film.**

Kevin Meul: "There is always a personal reason to tell a story, and all my stories are about young people. Maybe that has to do with my own age, and my protagonists over the years will grow up alongside with me. I myself had a rather

turbulent youth, and it felt like I had to grow responsible too fast. When you're young, there's nothing you want more than acting like an adult. But once that time has come, there is a nostalgia, as if you want to be young and brash again. That's a feeling I wanted to assimilate in this story. I hope some elements will look familiar to a young audience, while older people might remember certain key-emotions: the last holiday spent with your parents, the first love..."

### Coming-of-age

Kevin Meul: "Benjamin is not gradually, but brutally pushed into the age of maturity. In this case literally 'with a bang'. MY FIRST HIGHWAY is a coming-of-age story about a boy discovering about love and life simultaneously in the most fantastic but horrible way."

Aäron Roggeman (Benjamin): "For a

teenager, life is a fast-way. Straight from your safe haven, you land in a wild and puzzling adventure. This is Benjamin's first big adventure."

### Colours

Meul made some interesting choices, like keeping the adults literally out of the picture (you only hear them) giving room to the two youngsters to fully carry the movie. And the use of colour motifs in an explicitly notable way. „Each character has its own colour. Benjamin is always dressed in innocent, peaceful blue. As the film progresses, the tint becomes increasingly darker, almost black. Red represents love and passion, but also danger, which is associated with the girl. The brown, beige tones of the parents stand for steadfastness. „

### Favourite scenes

Meul: "My favourite scene is when the two youngsters on the beach for the first time talk to each other. With only few elements, many things are happening there. Hardly knowing each other, the connection is made through a silly game, based on the fact that girls can't do sound effects. Did you ever try? It's true: girls absolutely can't."



Roggeman: "My favourite scene was shooting a gun. Not with real bullets, but still I didn't expect the shock to be so strong, which made my reaction look perfectly natural."

Meul: "We had everything on camera: blood, splattering brains... But all that got overpowered by Aäron's spontaneous reaction. That's why we kept those images in the movie."



– [Interview: Lessen in het Donker](#)

→ [watch trailer](#)



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European Children's Film Association

Rue du Pavillon 3, B-1030 Bruxelles

Phone: +32 (0)2 242 54 09

Fax: +32 (0)2 242 74 27

E-mail: [mail@ecfaweb.org](mailto:mail@ecfaweb.org); [journal@ecfaweb.org](mailto:journal@ecfaweb.org)

Website: [www.ecfaweb.org](http://www.ecfaweb.org)

Please send press releases, advertisements, questions & information to:

Gert Hermans, [journal@ecfaweb.org](mailto:journal@ecfaweb.org)

ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economical, aesthetic, social, political and educational aspects. Since 1988 ECFA brings together a wide range of European film professionals and associations, producers, directors, distributors. ECFA aims to set up a working structure in every European country for films for children and young people, a structure adapted to Europe's multicultural interests.

For more information and memberships (€ 200 per year):

ECFA

European Children's Film Association Phone: +32 (0)2 242 54 09

E-mail: [mail@ecfaweb.org](mailto:mail@ecfaweb.org)

[www.ecfaweb.org](http://www.ecfaweb.org)

The European Children's Film Distribution Network:

[www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/network](http://www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/network)

Databases on children's film festivals, sales agents, distributors and

TV-programmers interested in European films for children.

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### Contributors to this issue:

Gert Hermans (Editor)

Reinhold Schöffel

Felix Vanginderhuysen

Céline Ravenel

Elise van Beurden

Gudrun Sommer

Viola Gabrielli

Julia Niessen

Monica Wahi

Kerdi Oengo

Katleen Goossens

Alice Goezu

Anja Horckmans

Niklas Teng

Sigrid Klausmann

Delphine Dumon

Stefan Stiletto

Sannette Naeyé

Eszter Vuojala

Eva Pa

Lessen in het Donker

Proofreading: Adam Graham

Design: Sam Geuens

ECFA website: Udo Lange & Sam Geuens