Focus on Children’s Film Festivals in Europe: 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).

The opening of the Conference: ECFA’s General Secretary Felix Vanginderhuysen; Ale Kino-director and ECFA’s board member Jerzy Moszko-wicz; Robin Mallick, General Secretary of ECFF, and ECFA’s president Mia Lindrup (left to right)

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 films, her recommendations are relevant everywhere.

The Kids For Kids Festival 2005 in Naples/Italy: A Strong and Unique Event

Kids For Kids (KFK) 2005, the international festival presenting films made by children for children, took place in Naples, June 30th to July 3rd. KFK brought together 20 young filmmakers from all over the world and even more adult professionals, hosted by the Italian Fondazione Osservatorio Bambini e Media. The competing films were selected from 350 participating titles, received from more than 50 countries.

KFK edition 2005 again was a remarkable event, marked by two almost scientific conclusions:
- The nature of this project is absolutely strong and unique. For a group of young filmmakers, KFK will ALWAYS be a valuable experience. And time after time, they will convince and surprise people about their artistic talents and technical capabilities.
- The city of Naples is well known for its chaos and disorder, and kept up that reputation pretty well throughout the festival (although KFK tried to rescue its participants from a barrage of transportation problems).

New information service for Young Filmmakers on www.ecfaweb.org

For several years ECFA does not only serve the professional children’s film scene, but also supports young people who make their own films, especially when it comes to international exchange projects. The best example you can find here: the Kids For Kids Festival.

For there are many international festivals and workshops for young filmmakers in various European countries ECFA launches a database to inform everybody interested in these projects and to enable young people to participate with their productions.

The database will also help the organizers of these events to contact their target groups. Please help us to complete this database by sending us web sites’ or email-addresses of those projects that you suggest to be included. Send them to: journal@ecfaweb.org
The News Section: Films, Festivals, Prizes

Vilnius Film Festival for Children and Young People, Vilnius/Lithuania
Contact: c/o Lithuanian Youth Centre
Konstitucijos pr. 25
LT-08105 Vilnius
Phone: +370-62045137
Fax: +370-52755651
E-Mail: kidsfestival@hotmail.com

International Film Festival for Children and Youth, Zlín/Czech Republic,
Special mention: „Hayatt“ by Gholam Reza Ramezani, Iran 2004
Golden Slipper for the best film for young people: “Fourteen Sucks” by Filipa Freijd, Martin Jern, Emil Larsson, Henrik Northon, Sweden 2004 (also awarded by FICC- & Ecumenical juries);
Special mention: „Mean Creek“ by Jacob Aaron Estes, USA 2004

The Europe Award for the best European debut: „Miraoge“ by Svetozar Ristovski, Austria/Macedonia 2004.
Contact: Int. Film Festival for Children and Youth Zlín, Filmfest, s.r.o.
Filmmová 174, CZ-76179 Zlín
Phone: ++420-57-7592442
Fax: ++420-57-7592442
E-Mail: festival@zlinfest.cz
Internet: www.zlinfest.cz

„Mo & Friese“ Short Film Festival for Children, Hamurg/Germany
Special mentions: „Zartmo“ by Marc Damans, Belgium 2004, and „Strong Hold“ by Morten E. Evelid, Norway 2004
Contact: KurzFilmAgentur Hamburg e.V.
Friedrichsallee 7
D-22675 Hamburg
Phone: ++49-40-39 10 63 - 29
Fax: ++49-40-39 10 63 - 20
E-Mail: kinder@shortfilm.com
Internet: www.shortfilm.com

International Young Audience Film Festival „Ale Kinol“, Poznan/Poland,
Feature film competition: Grand Prix Golden Goats: „The Italian“ by Andrei Kravchuk, Russia 2004;
Silver Goats: „The Colour of Milk“
CIFEJ-Award: „Count to 100“ by Linda Krogse Helmborg, Denmark 2004;
Special mention: „Paradise is Somewhere Else“ by Abdulrasoul Golbon, Iran 2003.

Continuing from page 1
The Professional Idealists

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.

Günther Kinstler, Lucas Children’s Film Festival Frankfurt; Dagmar Forelle, Berlin Int. Film Festival; Lennart Ström, BUFF - Int. Children and Young People’s Film-Festival, Malmö

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 a big 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 that the others do not have. 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.

Continued on page 6

ECFA-Journal 3/2005
A Strong and Unique Event

making and representing their work in the perfectly accommodated festival’s auditorium. To make the KFK Festival more available for those at home, a webpage was created for daily festival updates at www.kidsforkidsfestival.org.

KFK tried to link with local youngsters by offering them a workshop. But the competition screenings were a more or less closed and private event. The juries, with Mia Lindrup as president of the International Professional Jury, came up with the following results:

The Winning Films 2005:

International Youngsters’ Jury
Category Animation 6 – 12 years
The Brave Cat, by La Matatena Workshop, Mexico
Category Animation 13 – 16 years
Growing Up, by Escuela Taller de Cine El Maté, Argentina
Category Live Action, 13 – 16 years
Old Pikey, by Marcus Hagwall, Härnösand, Sweden
Category One Minute 6 – 12 years
Chalk Painting, by Lusine Babayan, „Manana“ Youth Educational-Cultural Center, Yerevan, Armenia
Category One Minute 13 – 16 years
Just Love and Death, by Hermann Greuel, Film House Ttvibl, Tromsø, Norway
Grand Pix for Outstanding Film
The Sun Might Shine Tomorrow, by Mikael Bundsen, Mjolken, Sweden

International Professionals’ Jury
Category Animation 6 – 12 years
Hope This Fish Bites, by Irene Falck Jensen, Hornnes Children School, Hornnes, Norway
Category Animation 13 - 16 years
Super Pig Knoore, by Joris Van Dael, KidsCam, Kontich, Belgium
Category Live Action, 6 – 12 years
Nine Times Eight, by Joseph Procopio, Canada
Category Live Action, 13 – 16 years
No Change Given, by Alan Slattery, Young Irish Filmmakers, Kilkenny, Ireland
Category One Minute 6 – 12 years
Chalk Painting, by Lusine Babayan, „Manana“ Youth Educational-Cultural Center, Yerevan, Armenia
Category One Minute 13 – 16 years
Labyrinth, by Blažoje Lupa & Slobodan Pajic, Centaf, Cacak, Serbia & Montenegro
Grand Pix for Outstanding Film
Escape From the Salad, by Yuri Krasny, Studio Ecoanima, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

S.O.F.I.A. Foundation Prize for Most Promising Young Filmmaker
Marcis Hagwall, Härnösand, Sweden, for Old Pikey

The Best of Kids for 2005 for Sale!

The compilation „The Best of Kids For Kids 2005“ will be available on VHS (13 Euros) and DVD (20 Euros). Prices plus shipping fee 10 Euros (free for CIFE and ECFA members!). Order forms and more information you will find on www.kidsforkidsfestival.org

If you are planning to present the Kids For Kids compilation at your festival or in your school, please inform us about the dates and circumstances of your presentation, and we will send you the necessary information to be printed in your catalogue or program.

Contact: ECFA’s office at Brussels (see page 6) or gerth@jekino.be

The News Section:
Films, Festivals, Prizes

Animation film competition:
Grand Prix Golden Goats: „Flatlife“ by Jonas Goirnaert, Belgium 2004;
Silver Goats: „Raining Cats and Frogs“ by Jacques-Rémy Girerd, France 2003
Bronze Goats: „Pffirrate“ by Xavier André & Guillame Hérént, France 2003.

Contact: „Ale Kino“
c/o Children’s Art Centre
St. Marcin Street 80/82
PL-61809 Poznan
Phone: ++48-61-6464 481
Fax: ++48-61-6464 472
E-Mail: alekino@alekino.com
Internet: www.alekino.com

Children’s Filmfest Munich, Germany

Contact: Kinderfilmfest, c/o Internat. Münchner Filmwochen GmbH
Somenestr. 21
D-80331 München
Phone: ++49-89-381904-0
Fax: ++49-89-381904-26
E-Mail: katrin.hoffmann@filmfest-muenchen.de
Internet: www.filmfest-muenchen.de

Lee Lissie Children’s Film Fest, Leipzig/Germany
Children’s jury awards: „Who Kisses An Iguana? (Second Hand Child)“ by Karola Hattop, Germany 2003, and „Frederick and Robin Hood“ by Rolf Losansky, Germany 1997 (!)
Contact: Landesfilmdienst Sachsen
Karl-Heine-Straße 83
D-04229 Leipzig
Phone: ++49-341-4774155
Fax: ++49-341-4774153
E-Mail: medienzentrum-leipzig-lfd@t-online.de
Internet: www.landesfilmdienst-sachsen.de

Giffoni International Film Festival, Italy
„Free to Fly“ Section
Best film: „Innocent Voices“ by Luis Mandoki, Mexico 2004
Best short film: „Gabriel“ by Cherie Knot, Australia 2004
Jury Grand Prix: „Dear Frankie“ by Shona Auerbach, UK 2004

„Y-Generation“-Section
Best film: „Napoli“ by Dennis Gansel, Germany 2004
Best short film: „Life“ by Ariel Zylberstejn, Mexico 2004
Jury Grand Prix: „Zhoorek“ by Ryszard Bryliski, Poland 2003

„First Screens“ Section
Best Film: „Duma“ by Caroll Ballard
Albanese, USA 2005
Best short film: „Tadeo Jones“ by Enrique Gato, Spain 2005
CIFEJ celebrated its 50th Anniversary in Tehran, Iran

Organizing this year’s CIFEJ General Assembly in Tehran, Iran was a daring decision. A decision cursed in Iranian Embassies all over the world by people desperately trying to get a visa. But it turned out a wonderful option too, making all CIFEJ-members experience a unique type of generosity. Thanks to the effort of the hosts Kanoon and Farabi Cinema Foundation, Iran was a country with no boundaries to hospitality. Truly historic words were spoken when visiting Kanoon’s toyshop: “Take a look around and if there’s anything you like, take it!”

This General Assembly was dedicated to CIFEJ’s 50th anniversary, celebrated by 50 people from 25 countries. In his book CIFEJ, A HISTORY, Robert Roy tries to capture this history in texts and pictures. A documentary celebrating Kati Ranody (Hungary, 84), as the oldest CIFEJ-member … very much alive, as can be confirmed by everyone who saw her strutting through Tehran airport, waving her walking stick, shout every official: “I was at this conference. It was a very good conference, yes, thank you”.

With an Award for lifetime achievement, Ebrahim Fourouse, writer and director of i.e. “The Jar” and “Children of Petroleum” was honoured. Fourouse, amongst others in his generation, he developed a new wave of Iranian films for youngsters and dedicated his award to ‘a tradition of 35 years of excellence in children’s films’.

During the five days the participants could update their knowledge on various projects, representing CIFEJ’s aims and intentions: cultural diversity, professionalism in children’s film, offering a platform to young-scriptwriters, online scriptwriting workshops, etc. - a video library of master classes, seminars, exhibitions, puppet theatre (who can say that he once saw “Little Red Riding Hood” performed on a sunny afternoon in Tehran?), art workshops (by animation artist Ali Morad), a short-film selection and a visit to the Saba Children’s media in Latin America (the Mercosur-project, represented by Susana Velleggia), the German scriptwriter’s Winter Academy (represented by Viola Wartewig), a panel on cultural diversity in media in the Asian Pacific (Mauritius, Sri Lanka, India, Iran), a presentation of Kids For Kids’ national ‘branches’ in Iran and India and a wonderful documentary on the representation of youth in Scandinavian films (by Helga Fjordholm & Birgit Christophersen).

Firdoze Bulbulia made a powerful presentation on the 5th World Summit on Media for Children in South Africa (2007). She spoke about the project “I am an African”, about her own perspective on African identity and about children’s media overcoming inter-racial boundaries.

But some boundaries are hard to cross. Iran excelled in the unique way they hosted this GA, but on the level of discussions, sometimes it was difficult to ‘speak the same language’. The Iranian Charter for Young Adults’ Cinema raised many questions but gave few answers. As in every aspect of the social and cultural life, it was almost impossible to fit all the details in one picture of ‘Iran’. This journey might have been dedicated to CIFEJ, but in the first place it was an intriguing socio-cultural encounter. The issue most mentioned of course was women’s rights in this society. Conversations between the younger as well as the older generation brought up discontent, fatalism but also hope for the future.

The hosting Kanoon Institute for Intellectual and Cultural Development of Children was founded in the sixties and had a huge influence on the present cultural life in Iran, adding a progressive touch to the cultural tradition. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Kanoon helped the Iranian cinema to find its new place in society. A trip around the Kanoon heritage included a visit to heaven-disguised-as-a-toyshop, children’s libraries, exhibitions, puppet theatre (who can say that he once saw “Little Red Riding Hood” performed on a sunny afternoon in Tehran?), art workshops (by animation artist Ali Morad), a short-film selection and a visit to the Saba Animation Studios.

But high point of the ceremony was CIFEJ, gathering its members to vote upon a board of directors and an action plan for the future, focussing upon:

- re-structuring the website into a better tool for networking and information-exchange
- a video library of master classes, seminars, online scriptwriting workshops, etc.
- the formation of national policies to create space for children’s media in each continent.

The newly elected members of the CIFEJ board are Athina Rikaki (Greece, president), Amir Esfandiari (Iran, vice-president), Firdoze Bulbulia (South-Africa, vice-president), René Malo (Canada, secretary general), Monic Lessard (Canada, treasurer), T.S. Nagabharana (India), Firdoze Bulbulia (South-Africa, vice-president), René Malo (Canada, secretary general), Monic Lessard (Canada, treasurer), Elin Stangeland (Norway), Andrzej Roman-Jasiewicz (Poland), T.S. Nagabharana (India), Susanna Velleggia (Argentina).

On this CIFEJ-board, many strong representatives from various regions are represented. We wish them all the courage and energy to continue their work and we are hoping for a close and warm relationship of co-operation and friendship with ECFA, on the European continent.

Gert Hermans
Robert Roy’s book CIFEJ - A HISTORY can be ordered by email on info@cifej.com
Films on the Horizon

New European films for children which are ready to be discovered for your programmes. More information and more films can be found at www.ecfaweb.org. Of course we can never guarantee that we cover all important new films. Producers, distributors and sales agents are kindly invited to inform us of their new releases.

Cinematográficas
C/ Fuente del Saiz, 5
E-28016 Madrid
phone: +34 - 91 - 458-11-22
fax: +34 - 91 - 458-11-22
E-Mail: elpasopc@jet.es
Internet: www.elpasopc.com

Mat, the Cat
Feature Film, Switzerland 2005
Director: Michael Steiner
Production: Kontraproduktion AG
World Sales: Nordisk Film Internat. Sales
phone: +41 - 492 48 10
fax: +41 - 492 48 86
E-Mail: kontra@kontra.ch
Internet: www.kontra.ch

Percy, Buffalo Bill and Me
Feature Film, Sweden/Denmark 2005
Director: Anders Gustafsson
Production: Felicia Film AB, Nordisk
World Sales: Nordisk Film Internat. Sales
phone: +45 - 35-6882804
fax: +45 - 35-6882800
E-Mail: hugo@ capitolfilms.com
Internet: www.capitolfilms.com

Ranrend, the Fox
Animation Film, Luxembourg 2004
Director: Thierry Schiel
Production: Onriia Productions S.A.
World Sales: Onriia Productions S.A.
L-1450 Luxembourg
phone: +352 - 26 43 41-1
fax: +352 - 26 43 17 50
E-Mail: info@onriiapictures.com
Internet: www.onriiapictures.com

Valo
Feature Film, Finland 2005
Director: Kaja Juurikkala
Production: Periferia Productions Oy
World Sales: Periferia Productions Oy
Kauppipalante 12, FI-91100 Ii
phone: +358 - 40 541 2922
fax: +358 - 8 650 130
E-Mail: oui.rousu@periferia productions.fi
Internet: www.periferiaproductions.fi

León and Olvido
Feature Film, Spain 2004
Director: Xavier Bermúdez
Production & World Sales: El Paso Producciones

ECFA-Journal 3/2005
ECFA in Persons:

Gert Hermans, ECFA & Jekino, Brussels

For ten 10 years now, Gert Hermans has been working in the Flemish Centre for Children & Youth Film and Jekino-Films (Belgium). „I started by writing about children's films. Nowadays, I am focussed on children's film distribution and the editing of ‘our’ magazine Generiek.”

Since the very first and rewarding international contacts, there was always a major interest in international co-operation. „Partly thanks to ECFA. But four years ago … I remember Felix Vanginderhuysen asked me ‘if I would be interested in working on a festival representing the work of young filmmakers?’ Ever since, the Kids For Kids Festival has become a very dear project to me, as it brings out so many good things:
- Networking is a word so easily used. And I wouldn’t call the KFKF a network. But at least, together with Jo-Anne Blouin and many other partners, we created a platform and atmosphere in which networking is for our participants almost unavoidable.

Continuing from page 2

The Professional Idealists

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

More information on the conference and photos will soon be published on our website www.ecfaweb.org

Your Advertising in ECFA-Journal and on www.ecfaweb.org

ECFA-Journal is published and distributed both on paper and as pdf-file in 600 copies and reaches almost everybody involved in the production, distribution, broadcasting and exhibition of films for children in Europe. It is an effective publication to inform the scene of your new production, sales offers, festival data or distribution programme.

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-half page (133 x 180 mm): 120 Euros  
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