ECFA’s Conference at Cinekid Amsterdam 2006 on the Distribution of Films for Children in Europe: Collaboration and Education

„We hope this day will clearly unveil a line to follow in the future.” Moderator Mieke Bernink welcomed 25 participants from 9 countries at the conference in Amsterdam. Cinekid brings together a growing amount of international professionals in the children’s film industry, making the festival the perfect location for an ECFA conference about ’The (digital) future of children’s film distribution in Europe’. How can the circumstances for distributing children’s film in Europe be improved? Collaboration in applying for European funding could be a major step forward.

Felix Vanginderhuysen explained briefly about the two most common ways on how the European Union supports the distribution of films:

European Support Systems
1. Selective support:
For a group of at least five distributors, based upon costs for promotion and advertising (P&A). The selective support system takes in account points gathered on a numeric scale: the ‘score’ raises with the amount of participating countries; children’s films get one point in bonus. Selective support in general covers approximately 40 % of the P&A costs, partly as a funding, partly as a loan.

2. Automatic support:
Every recent European film distributed can be taken in consideration, judged upon a quota scale. This funding is meant for reinvestment in future projects.

Discussion: How essential is funding? All distributors stated that European support, sometimes combined with national funding is essential for survival. Eli Stangeland (Ciorianderfilm): ‘A Norwegian distributor wouldn’t even consider buying a film without a guarantee on some form of funding.’ Tonje Hardersen (representing Film & Kino): ‘Meanwhile the Norwegian government policy was able to ‘educate’ and stimulate the public. The more titles running in the theatres, the more admissions we have.’

But the co-operation needed for such action is sometimes hard to achieve. Distributors often are individualists, basing their decisions on personal taste and different cultural traditions.

Case Study: Winky’s Horse
This case study on the film „Winky’ Horse” („Het Paard van Sinterklaas”, directed by Mischa Kamp, Netherlands 2005) is based upon facts and figures from three countries. In Sweden it is distributed by Folkets Bio (Rose-Marie Strand), in France by Les Films du Préau (Marie Bourillon) and in Norway by Arthouse (Svend B. Jensen). On the day of the conference none of the countries had already released the film.

Sweden: Folkets Bio represented by Rose-Marie Strand
Folkets Bio owns 18 arthouse-theatres, but it was clear that this film needed a release in the commercial theatres.

Negative aspects:
- Dubbing is needed (expensive).

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The „Best of 2006”-collection is now available on DVD - films made by children from all around the world. This collection can also be presented at children’s film festivals. See www.kidsforkidsfestival.org for more information.

Dear Readers of ECFA-Journal, ...

The distribution of ambitious films for children has always been one of the most important topics among ECFA’s activities. There is still a big gap between the box office results of the blockbusters and their quality and the possibilities for small but high quality productions to find at least a small audience. Blockbusters usually raise their audience with big promotion campaigns. For a few days they are the „talk of the town”, a must see for everyone, but before the young audience notices that the movie is not as good as promised already millions of people paid for their tickets and many of them leave the theatres disappointed. We will not change this situation but ECFA stands for a bigger variety and that it is worthwhile to produce, distribute and promote high quality films for children. ECFA’s conference at Cinekid Amsterdam, which is the focal topic in this issue of ECFA-Journal, was part of these efforts.

Some criteria for what we call „quality films for children” you will find at www.ecfaweb.org/ecfnet/quality.php
Collaboration and Education

- The way the Santa Clause character appears in this film is not familiar to Swedish children.

Promotion:
- The results of the pre-screenings were positive as children proved they were fully capable to understand the story.
- A poster was designed, careful not to focus on ‘the horse’, so not to scare off the boys.

Facts:
The film will be released with 10 copies on November 24th, hoping to reach 10,000 spectators plus many school children in the 2nd run.

Norway: Arthouse represented by Svend B. Jensen

Positive aspects:
- The positive experiences with Dutch films so far.
- A successful pre-vision in the Kristiansand Festival.
- The similarities between Holland and Norway, making the film very recognizable and somewhat exotic at the same time.
- The Norwegian cinema system, with 200 cinemas, mainly municipal theatres.

Promotion:
- The title was changed into “Hest er Best” ("The Horse is the Best"), not to connect the film to the particular ‘Santa Clause’-period but to make it relevant all year long.
- Horses will line up at the theatres, horse riding clubs and magazines are involved in the promotion campaign. There will be tickets and caps to win on ‘horse websites’.

- Film & Kino creates an educational dossier.

Facts:
After pre-screenings in 12 cities, the film will be released with 14 prints on November 3rd, one day before ‘Cinema Day’ (best day of the year, selling approximately 100,000 tickets for 50 % of the price).

France: Les Films du Préau, represented by Marie Bourillon
All numbers are lined up on one sheet, illustrating the smallest details about the French campaign.

Negative aspect:
The way the Santa Clause character appears in this film is only known to the audience in Northern France.

Promotion:
- The poster was developed in a long ‘trial-and-error’ process; all steps were presented at this conference.
- Different from the Scandinavian posters focussing on the horse, the French poster focuses on the girl.
- Partnerships were made with a toy-shop and with media partners.
- A French dubbed version was found in Belgium (afterwards used in Quebec).
able to save costs, but it will surely be like that in the future.

Even when costs are decreasing, still distributors are depending on the availability of screens. How can ‘more copies’ bring any benefit, as long as every screen is occupied by a Hollywood blockbuster? Programmers should realize that a program schedule is flexible, and not fixed, as it is generally considered.

Children’s film distributors should fully use the two points that we benefit from in our field of work: education and collaboration. That is why the last session of the conference was held amongst distributors in small committee.

Collaboration between Distributors

As a follow-up to this debate, distributors from Norway (2), Holland, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and France discussed ways of collaboration. For instance, recent experiences with ‘Lotte from Gadgetville’ and ‘The Three Musketeers’ proved that we miss a lot of chances on a European level when we do not come up with our common goals and interests.

All distributors at present agreed to meet on regular bases to exchange information and share interest in various titles or projects. A questionnaire will soon be sent out to agree upon further engagements. The next meeting is planned during the Berlin Film Festival in February 2007.

Note: The first concrete result of this meeting, Germany’s MFA Filmdistribution (represented by Christian Meinke) found two necessary partners (Belgium and The Netherlands) to make a European application for ‘My Name is Eugen’. Gert Hermans
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.

Osmunstr. 17
D-70599 Stuttgart
phone: +49-711-479 36 66
fax: +49-711-479 26 58
E-Mail: post@sola-media.net
Internet: www.sola-media.net
www.buitenspeldefilm.be

Paula’s Secret
Feature Film, Germany 2006
Director: Gernot Krää
Production: Filmautoren AG, Element e, ZDF
World Sales:Filmautoren AG

Gilles
Feature Film, Belgium 2005
Production: Jan Verheyen
World Sales:Sola Media GmbH

The Three Musketeers

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The News Section:
Films, Festivals, Awards

Int. Experts Jury’s Award for a film for young people: ”God Save the King” by Ulf Malmros, Sweden 2005
Children’s Jury for animated films: „The Three Musketeers” by Janis Cimermanis & Gert Fredholm, Latvia/DK/UK 2006
Internet: www.ff-schlingel.de

Chicago Int. Children’s Film Festival, Chicago/USA, Oct. 19th to 29th 2006
Children’s Jury Prizes, feature films: 
1. „We Shall Overcome” by Niels Arden Oplev, Denmark 2005
2. „Winky’s Horse” by Mischa Kamp, Netherlands 2006
3. „Zozo” by Josef Fares, Sweden 2005
Children’s & Adult Jury Prizes, Animated films: „Kiriku and the Wild Beasts” by Michel Ocelot and Benedicte Galup, France 2005
Adult Jury Prizes, feature films: 
1. „Zozo”
2. „We Shall Overcome”
3. „Winky’s Horse”
Audience’s „Best of the Fest”-Award: „The Horror Bus”.
Internet: www.cicff.org

Cinekid - Int. Film, Television and New Media Festival for Children and Young People, Amsterdam/The Netherlands, Jury’s Award: „We Shall Overcome”;
Children’s Award: „The Lost Treasure of the Knights Templars”.
Internet: www.cinekid.nl

Nordic Filmsdays Lübeck/Germany, Nov. 1st to 5th 2006
Best film for young audiences: „Pitbullterje” by Arild Fröhlich, Norway 2005;
Children’s Jury Award: „The Lost Treasure of the Knights Templars”;
Special Mention: „Percy, Buffalo Bill & Me” by Anders Gustafsson, Sweden 2005
Internet: www.filmtage.luebeck.de

FICI - International Children & Youth Film Festival, Madrid/Spain
Children’s Jury Award: „No Meio la Rua” by Antonio Carlos Fontoura, Brazil 2005;
Young People’s and International Jury’s Awards: „Ghettokids” by Christian Wagner, Germany 2002;
Audience’s Award: „The Water Giant” by John Henderson & Reino Unido, CAN 2005
Internet: www.fici.info

Oulu Int. Children’s Film Festival, Finland
Children’s and CIFEJ’s Juries Awards: „We Shall Overcome”; „Little Bear Award: Raimo O. Niemi
Internet: www.ouka.fi/lef

Castellinaria Festival internazionale del cinema giovane, Bellinzona/Switzerland
Gold: „Water” by Deepa Mehta, Canada/India 2005;
Silver: „Combat 16” by Mirko Borscht, Germany 2005;
http://www.ouka.fi/lef

The Trip to Panama
Animation, Germany 2006
Director: Otevrel, Martin

A Word with the Organizers of Children’s Film Festivals

Katrin Hoffmann, Kinderfilmfest Munich

ECFA-Journal’s correspondent Holger Twele introduces Directors of Children’s Film festivals from all over the world.

What is special about your festival?

My festival is fully embedded in the International Filmfest Munich. Thus it also reaches producers or distributors, who are not directly related to children’s films. We have a lively exchange with the other sections of the festival. In 2005 I started to programme not only long feature films but short films as well, and this year I was very pleased that I also had a long documentary film for children in the programme. I want to continue my work in this way and integrate documentary films for children in the future.

What do you think about the present situation of children’s films?

I was very surprised to see so many European children’s films of good quality this year. Concerning the German production for children everybody knows that there was a remarkable development during the last few years and that Germans are able to produce good quality films.

What is the most important part of a children’s film?

A children’s film has to touch the children seriously. It has to tell a good story which is interesting for children, maybe with some suspense, too. There has to be a hero with whom they want to identify. Also I find it very interesting, to show films about other cultures. Therefore I want to include documentarists, where children can see life in other countries, no matter if they are near by or far away.

What is your favourite children’s film?

One of my alltime favourite films is “My Life as a Dog” by Lasse Hallström. The film’s protagonist, despite his tragic life story, is able to solve his problems and he succeeds. He identifies himself with a dog that is sent into outer space in a rocket. With this point of view the boy manages his own life too. Children are very touched by this film, because they realise, that there is always something worse than their individual situation.

Documentaries for Children raise more and more interest

The Amsterdam festivals Cinekid and IDFA have the longest tradition with documentary films for children. In 2001 ECFA together with partners co-organized a conference on this genre. Meanwhile many children’s film festivals opened their programme to documentary films as well.

The documentaries from Israel, that were announced in ECFA-Journal 1-2006, were presented at several European children’s film festivals during this summer.

Now, the Denmark/Netherlands-production “Heading for Peace” (Fodboldskolen) has won the UNICEF Special Prize at the Japan Prize 2006. In this drama-doco we learn that Jasmin and Dejana are both living in Bosnia. Jasmin is a Muslim and loves football, but hates Serbs – or at least his father does. Dejana is a Serb and loves football too, but her mother does not want her to play with Muslims, as they killed a family member during the war. Both of them end up at a football school during the holidays – and realise, that the other part is not that bad, as they have been told... maybe even attractive!

The News Section:

FILMS, FESTIVALS, AWARDS

Bronze: “My Name is Elisabeth” by Jean-Pierre Améris, France 2006
Mini Castle: “Winky’s Horse”.
Internet: www.castellinaria.ch

INT. CHILDREN’S FILM FESTIVAL, VIENNA

Children’s Jury Award: “Love and Dance” by Eitan Anner, Israel 2006;
Special Mentions: “Bonkers” and “We Shall Overcome”;
UNICEF-Award: “We Shall Overcome”;
Audience Award: “Winky’s Horse”.
Internet: www.kinderfilmfestival.at

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL, ALÈ KINO, POZNAN/Poland, Dec. 10th to 16th 2006
Contact: International Young Audience Film Festival “Alè Kino”
Children’s Art Centre
St. Marcin Street 80/82
PL-61809 Poznan
Phone: ++48-61-6454 481
E-Mail: festival@alekino.com
Internet: www.alekino.com

CHILDREN FILM FESTIVAL - CINE JUNIOR ’94, JAN 31ST TO FEBRUARY 13TH 2007
Contact: Association Cinéma Public
52, rue Joseph de Maistre
F-75018 Paris
Phone: ++33-1-42 26 02 06
E-Mail: cinejunior@cinemapublic.org
Internet: www.cinejunior94.org

INT. FILM FESTIVAL BERLIN, KINDERFILMFEST/14PLUS, FEBRUARY 8TH TO 18TH 2007
Contact: International Filmfestival Berlin, Kinderfilmfest/14plus
Potsdamer Str. 5
D-10785 Berlin
Phone: ++49-30-25920420
E-Mail: generation@berlina.de
Internet: www.berlina.de

EUROPESE JUGENDFILMFESTIVAL VLAANDEREN, ANTWERP & BRUGGE, BELGIUM
FEBRUARY 17TH TO 25TH 2007
Contact: Europees Jeugdfilmmuseum Vlaanderen
Vlaanderen, Sommèstraat 49
B-2060 Antwerp
Phone: ++32-3-23 26 409
E-Mail: info@jeugdfilmmuseum.be
Internet: www.jeugdfilmmuseum.be

BUFF • INT. CHILDREN’S FILM FESTIVAL, MALMÖ/Sweden,
MARCH 13TH TO 17TH 2007
Contact: BUFF • INT. CHILDREN’S & YOUTH PEOPLE’S FILM-FESTIVAL
P.O. Box 4277
S-20314 Malmö
Phone: ++46-40-305205
E-Mail: info@buff.se
Internet: www.buff.se
ECFA in Persons:

Adam Graham, Leeds/UK

Leeds Young People’s Film Festival

For Adam Graham (27 years old) ECFA is a great communicating network between people, institutes, distributors and film festivals across Europe. “I think it is important to be able to network and develop relationships with everyone who works in this field as we all face the same problems and are all of the same mind set. ECFA is a non restrictive and non competitive organisation which can bring all like minded people together, it is important to support and be a part of this.”

In Adam’s opinion ECFA is essential in developing knowledge of what is happening with young people and film around Europe: “The information on the website is detailed and substantial. It is a crucial device for film programming. It would be great to develop an ECFA discussion forum online where questions, comments, ideas and help can be easily accessed. A bulletin board and groups could be developed for quick and easy information. This could also be set up for young people throughout Europe to find out what their European counterparts are doing and increase their knowledge and contacts.”

8th Leeds Young People’s Film Festival: 29th March - 6th April 2007
www.leedsfilm.com

A get-together of the Children’s Film Community at the International Film Festival in Berlin, February 10th 2007

On Saturday, February 10th, from 9 pm onwards there will be the famous get-together for all those working with children’s films, organized by ECFA, Alpha Filmkontor, Bundesverband Jugend und Film, Förderverein Deutscher Kinderfilm, Kinderfilm GmbH, Lucas International Children’s Film Festival Frankfurt, MDC International Film Distribution, Schlingel International Filmfestival for Children and Young Audience and Stiftung Goldener Spatz.

Location: Café am Neuen See, Lichtensteinallee 2, 10787 Berlin

ECFA’s Annual General Meeting in Berlin, Saturday 10th February 2007

The Annual General Assembly of the European Children’s Film Association will be held during the International Film Festival Berlin on Saturday February 10th, from 4.00 pm to 7.00 pm (approximately).

New Location: Literaturhaus, Fasanenstr. 23, 10719 Berlin.

Preliminary AGENDA:

2. Report on the ECFA-activities 2006
3. Financial report on the year 2006
4. Approval of the reports
5. Projects for 2007
6. Proposals from the members for future projects
7. Information from the members about their projects
8. Any other business