Short Films for Small Children

A rather out-of-the-spotlight section in film culture for children are short films. There are a few short film festivals that also have a section for children’s films as well as short film programmes in most of the children’s film festivals. But what happens with the short films after the festivals is not so well known. Therefore ECFA-Journal asked some distributors who work with short films for children to share their experience in a survey on the activities that are happening, in order to start an exchange of ideas, to establish a network between those who are active using short films for children and to motivate more people to present short films for small children.

The first question for a cinema owner, cultural manager, social worker or teacher is why to screen short films instead of or in addition to their usual programme. There are several possible answers. When it comes to children between four and six years old we simply have to admit that it would be a torture to force them to sit on a chair in a cinema or a kindergarten and watch a film for 90 minutes. Their ability to sit quietly and concentrate on a long story are not yet developed. On the other hand they often watch TV-programmes at home and so are used to a half-concentrated consumption of audiovisual media. Therefore, it is quite important to offer small children the opportunity to watch a film which is suitable for them regarding its content and its length with full concentration on a big screen and to meet

Get them Involved – New ideas how to win back the teenagers for film culture

Event:
Preliminary Agenda for ECFA’s General Assembly in Berlin, February 9th, 2008

New Ideas how to win back the Teenagers for Film Culture:

Dear Readers of ECFA-Journal, ...

When we finally received the design of an advert that ECFA, its members and friends can use to promote our organisation, immediately we realised that something had to be changed. Indeed: The design of ECFA-Journal was made 20 years ago and since then only details have been changed.

With this issue we have made the first step to renovate the layout of ECFA-Journal. We are not professional design-

LDan Academy. An academic year-round film education course for 12-15 year olds, accredited by Arts Award (an accreditation which counts towards UK school results and is based on measuring individual learning and development rather than just skill) with three Leeds High Schools. This course is a series of film screenings, hands-on workshops, masterclasses and filmmaking. It is set up as an introduction
The News Section: Films, Festivals, Awards

Lucas - International Children’s Film-festival, Frankfurt/Main / Germany

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the fascination of cinema. Cinema, as the most developed branch of narrative media culture, is the perfect medium to start with when it comes to learning how to use the media in a more active and creative way and not just as some eye-candy.

Once we know why, we can start to think where to find information on short films for children as well as sources for the films themselves. A starting point is always the festivals where new films appear and innovative ideas often come to reality first. It is also at festivals that most of the distributors find new films for their programmes. In the Nordic countries as well as in France, where culture has a special high value in everyday life as well as in the children’s education, there are a few small but active distributors who offer special short film programmes for small children.

For example: Sweden
The Swedish arthouse distributor Folks Bio has quite a long experience with short films for children. Per year they release two or three programmes under two separate labels: „Snuttebio“ for the smallest ones with a programme length of 35 minutes maximum and „SmåFolks Bio“ for those who are a little older with programmes between 35 and 50 minutes maximum. Often these programmes consist of four films with the same characters, like „Jack and Pedro“, „Pingus“, „Urho & Turpo“ or „Toolettubs & Jyro“. But there are also programmes with four completely different short films. Folks Bio prefer to select Swedish films or films without dialogue. Foreign films that need to be dubbed into Swedish language which - of course - raises the costs significantly.

Folks Bio distributes these programmes, at first, to arthouse cinemas, multiplexes and other theatres – with quite good results: around 10.000 spectators per year. A real box-office hit were three programmes with the „Pingus“-films from Switzerland, which generated 80.000 visitors in Sweden until now. Later the programmes go on DVD to schools, pre-schools and film clubs. The high density of cinemas in Sweden this is where they reach the largest audiences.

For example: Belgium
Jekino, as an arthouse distributor for films for young audiences as well as the Flemish children’s film centre, are mostly active in the Flemish speaking regions of Belgium. At the moment they distribute two short film programmes, the Finnish series „Toolettubs & Jyro“ and a programme with four short films under the title „Willy and the Wild Rabbit“. For small children Jekino also offers two semi-long animated films: „Lorange, Muffin & d’Artagnan“ and „Ladybird’s Christmas“ which are both distributed like normal feature films. Jekino also present short films as pre-programmes together with other feature films.

These films are not so often screened in theatres, but regularly in schools and film clubs for children. Therefore the number of spectators of 1.000 per year is not very high. Jekino regards these programmes mostly as a service for the youngest audience. For the selection of films this means that the budget is limited, so preferably Jekino will buy films that do not need to be dubbed.

In Belgium they also see a cultural difference between the Flemish and the Walloon region. In parts of Belgium the Flemish for example believe that French films are better. In the Flemish part, however, are quite allergic to short film programmes and also the audience is not convinced to spend money on it.

For example: Norway
In Norway Corianderfilm buys between four and six short films for children per year and distributes them as a package with a total length of about 50 minutes. These programmes are distributed first in cinemas and then later on DVD to schools, kindergartens and filmclubs. With these programmes Corianderfilm reaches 12.000 to 16.000 admissions per year. Corianderfilm’s manager, Eli Stangeland, is convinced that with more resources for marketing and promotion the results could even be better.

For example: Germany
In Germany there are two private agencies active in the field of short film distribution: Kurzfilmagentur Hamburg and Interfilm Berlin. Furthermore, the short film festival at Oberhausen offers compilations of award winning films from the festival’s programme. Kurzfilmagentur Hamburg also organizes a short film festival and for many years they have the short film section „Mo und Friese“. Some years ago they launched a short film compilation from the „Mo und Friese“ festival on 35mm for cinemas, later also on DVD.

The most successful project of short film distribution for children was launched by Bundesverband Jugend und Film (BJF) in 2006: the DVD-edition „Durchblick“. BJF’s media consultants Elke Andersen and Friedemann Schuchardt compiled two DVDs with short films for children. Both programmes were selected according to the activities in kindergartens and pre-schools. The first programme deals with the subjects of winter and christmas, the other with autumn and thanksgiving. The DVDs do not only contain several short films, but also slide shows from books for children (with speaker or to be read by the teacher) and additional material. This material helps teachers and educators to use the DVD as a medium that reminds on old traditions and makes them familiar to modern day children. What is the meaning of St. Martin’s celebration when he cuts his coat in two pieces to share it with the beggar and prevent him from dying in the cold? Who exactly was St. Nicholas and what did he do that made him so famous among children? How can we make ourselves these sweets that Polly and her grandmother prepare and sell at the market (in the film by Daniel Bergman)?: The user will find information on all these subjects on these DVDs.

BJF distributes its „Durchblick“ DVDs exclusively for non-theatrical screenings and non-profit purposes. They are screened at...
to all elements of the moving image and the opportunity to continue working with film through LYFF Young Consultants. This idea became a reality when five of the Film Academy members joined the Young Consultants group and subsequently initiated a second step in developing LYFF to be run by young people.

Through the Leeds City Council’s Youth Opportunity Fund (a National Government agenda to support safe and meaningful activities and spaces for young people) the 14-19 year old Young Consultants group applied for funding to work throughout the year, not only on the Film Festival but to set up their own young people’s cinema and develop the Young Consultants activities on a national and international level. They wanted to programme and promote their own film screenings for other young people, visit international film festivals, attend film related workshops and get career advice. Their funding bid was successful and they now have created their own enterprise – MediaFish. With a management committee of 10 young people aged 15-18 they have secured support from the Northern Film School, started their own programme of film screenings, visited the Cinekid Film, Television and New Media Festival as industry delegates all within three months of receiving the funding.

It has always been difficult to attract and sustain a teenage audience for LYFF and with the additions of year round activity such as Film Academy and MediaFish we are beginning to find the answer through the participants. It is the empowerment of the young people involved that keeps them interested in projects and more willing encouraging others to participate. If they have programmed and presented films within a Film Festival, they do not feel obliged to get an audience they want to get an audience, proving it’s definitely far more effective to have something done by young people than just something for them. Teenagers being so knowing about activities for them and have let us know that they generally prefer not to be told what to do unless it is advised by their friends – as cultural ambassadors. By fully incorporating young people in all processes of the Film Festival and having more time throughout the year to develop their skills, confidence, self esteem and enjoyment of international film qualities, we are beginning to sustain our audience.

There is still a long way to go with our aims of increasing and sustaining a teenage audience for International cinema but engaging the issue in the way that we have has proved immensely rewarding for both us and the young people involved – hopefully soon we’ll be out of a job!

Leeds Young People’s Film Festival is run by Debbie Maturi, Adam Graham and Martin Grund.

www.leedsfilm.com/ LYFF07.asp

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the 1,000 film clubs which are members of BJF but they are also sold to all the regional media centres that provide schools in their areas with different media. The success of the first two “Durchblick” DVDs of short films for children was extraordinary. Meanwhile they are available in almost every district across Germany and were seen by probably 120,000 children.

For example: Denmark

In Denmark the Danish Film Institute (DFI) handles the distribution of many short films for children, due to the fact that the DFI is the biggest producer of such films in Denmark. As we all know the DFI’s short films for children have an excellent reputation all around the world. The Danish Film Act says that all the films which were produced with public support also have to be used by and shown to the public. Therefore the DFI developed a comprehensive system to ensure that the films are available wherever they may be needed.

In the cinemas short films for children are mainly shown in organised programs for pre-school children. The DFI offers the short films for free to cinemas and municipalities who wish to show short films for free to cinemas and municipalities have to organise the practicalities to show the short films and make a network together. The number of screenings, as well as spectators, have been increasing every year since the project was launched. The DFI hopes that all municipalities, and thereby many cinemas in Denmark, wish to show short films for pre-schoolers during the next five years.

Furthermore, the films are available on DVD as anthologies or compilations and – since recently – as “Videos on Demand”. These DVDs go exclusively to the non-theatrical market with schools and public libraries as the biggest groups of users. With the public libraries the DFI has made a subscription agreement, so automatically they get all new productions at a modest price. There the films are lent for free to private borrowers, but several libraries also organise public screenings, often with debates, directors etc., for children with communicative activities.

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The News Section:
Films, Festivals, Awards

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Chicago International Children’s Film Festival

Children’s Jury, best feature films:
Adults’ Jury, best feature films:
1. “Leaps and Bounds”; 2. “Trigger” by Gunnar Vikene, Norway 2006; Adults’ Jury, best animated films:

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Cinekid - International Film, Television and New Media Festival for Children and Young People


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Nordic Filmdays, Luebeck/Germany

Children’s and Youth Film Award: “Leaps and Bounds”; “Hoppet” by Peter Naess, Sweden 2007; Special Mentions: “Bitter Sweetheart” by Hella Joof, Sweden 2007, and “Elias and the Royal Yacht”.

Children’s Jury: “Mystery of the Wolf” by Raimo O Niemi, Finland 2006; Special Mention: “Leaps and Bounds”.

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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. Obviously 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.

Paper Prince
Feature Film, Serbia 2007
Director: Marko Kostic
Production: Luksfilm
Festivals: Sarajevo
World Sales: Luksfilm
Vasilija Vasiljević a 18
11080 Zemun, Serbia
phone: ++381-11-196 018
E-Mail: luksfilm@gmail.com
Internet: www.luksfilm.com

Quest For A Heart
Animated Film, Finland 2007
Director: Pekka Lehtosaari
Production: MRP Matila Röhr
World Sales: Non Stop Sales
(contact details see left column)
Internet: www.rollinsydan.com

The Red Zora
Feature Film, Germany 2007
Director: Peter Kahane
Production: Studio Hamburg
World Sales: Studio Hamburg
Program Sales: jenfelder Allee 80
D-22039 Hamburg
phone: ++49-40-66885110
E-Mail: bzywko@studio-hamburg.de
Internet: www.studio-hamburg.de
www.rote-zora.universal-pictures.de

Seachd: The Inaccessible Pinnacle
Feature Film, Great Britain 2007
Director: Simon Miller
Production: Young Films
Festivals: Oulu 2007
World Sales: Young Films
Upper Ostagia House
Isle of Skye, IV44 8RQ, UK
phone: ++44-1471-844 444
E-Mail: chris@youngfilms.co.uk
Internet: www.youngfilms.co.uk
www.seachd.com

Where is Winky’s Horse?
Feature Film, The Netherlands 2007
Director: Mischa Kamp
Production: Bos Bros
World Sales: FRV Media / Delphis Films
(contact details see left column)
Internet: www.waarishetpaardvandensinterklaas.nl
Welcome to the 25th Anniversary!

Features - Shorts -
Documentaries - Animations
100 films for young audience!

City of Malmö Award — best feature 5 500 Euro
Church of Sweden Award — best feature 5 500 Euro
Youth Jury Award — best feature
County Council of Skåne Award — best short 2 700 Euro
BUFF Achievment Award 3 800 Euro

Welcome to the 2nd
BUFF Financing Forum
Co-productions for film and TV
for a young audience
BUFF Financing Forum will provide a unique opportunity for filmmakers to present and co-finance their latest projects.
BUFF Financing Forum will be the long awaited meeting-place for business representatives within this realm of the film industry. The forum will attract the attention and the participation of financiers, producers, distributors, commissioning editors, funding bodies and directors from northern Europe.

www.financingforum.eu
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Thus in Denmark there are around 440 pre-school screenings per year attended by 45,000 spectators. The DFI has high ambitions to develop these cultural film activities for small children: For 2008 they plan 580 pre-school screenings for 70,000 children.

Conclusions: Putting it all together we can say that almost all projects mentioned here are very successful on their own individual level. Some ideas to help to improve this short film culture for small children may be:

1. International co-operation in composing the programmes. There can be combinations of well-known and new characters.
2. There should be support from the EU MEDIA-fund to compile and distribute short film programmes for children.
3. The distribution must be planned for several years because it takes some time to promote such a new programme me to small children, parents and pre-schools.
4. The cinemas should establish a certain time and day when they present programmes for small children, preferably with a label that is easy to remember for the parents.
5. Short films for small children should be included in the different school film projects which have been established in several European countries.

Reinhold T. Schöffel

Thanks for contributing to this survey:
- Line Arlien-Søborg, Danish Film Institute
- Eli Stangeland, Corianderfilm, Norway
- Rose-Marie Strand, Folksbio, Sweden
- Felix Vanginderhuysen, Jekino Films, Belgium

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A get-together of the Children’s Film Community at the International Film Festival in Berlin, February 9th 2008

On Saturday, February 9th, 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, MDC International Film Distribution, Schlingel International Filmfestival for Children and Young Audience and Stiftung Goldener Spatzer. Location: Café am Neuen See, Lichtensteinallee 2, 10787 Berlin

ECFA’s Annual General Meeting in Berlin, Saturday 9th February 2008

The Annual General Assembly of the European Children’s Film Association will be held during the International Film Festival Berlin on Saturday February 9th, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm (approximately). Location: not yet fixed. Members get their invitation, guests ask for it, please.

Preliminary AGENDA:
4. Approval of the reports
5. Projects for 2008
6. Proposals from the members for future projects
7. Information from the members about their projects
8. Any other business