

the panel says! Popular themes easily come to the surface. „I love fishes but I hate football“ or „I think time travelling is great but dying is scary“. In the light of the Belgian project HERE BE MONSTERS, about a fisherman’s daughter, an intense discussion follows about the cinematic appeal of jellyfish and cuttlefish.

#### 4. Emotional orientation

For JIPPIE NO MORE, about a child with Down syndrome, director Margien Rogaar (SCRAPWOOD WAR) tests the emotional spectrum of her target audience. „How do you behave when you are angry? Do you want to be comforted or left in peace?“ Her most important question is: How does it feel to be different? „Some children in the panel were ‚different‘ themselves. They told me: It’s not easy to fit in when you’re different, but sometimes you can make it happen.“

Line Hatland asks for advice when making her mind up on KIDS CUP, a documentary zooming in on some participants of a youth football tournament. What does the panel think is important: football, the lives of the children or the broader context? Based on a trailer, she can even find out

which characters kids want to find out more about.

Pitchings with children prove their usefulness time and time again. Some



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screenwriters change the course of their story on the spot, some producers add new ambitions to their checklist (Sasha Kirienko is advised by the panel to invest in cross-media applications for RING OF LIFE) or see their ideas confirmed. And the panel? After a job well-done they quickly swallow the last cookies.

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Gert Hermans

## BINTI: The heat is on

A hot summer under a burning sun... it’s impossible to escape from the heat on a film set. While working on BINTI, Frederike Migom’s first feature-length film, actors are constantly looking for shelter under large parasols. „Fortunately, I function better in the heat than in the cold. And soon the young actors will get a chance to cool off in the neighbours swimming pool.“

11-year-old Binti has a special career dream. She wants to become a famous vlogger. Until one day, together with her dad, she has to run and hide from the police, who threatens them with deportation from Binti’s native country. Seeking shelter in an abandoned tree house she meets Elias and the two become friends. Binti promises to help her companion in his one-man battle for a better cause, named the ‘Save the Okapi Club’. Meanwhile an ingenious plan starts taking shape in Binti’s brain: dad should marry Elias’ mum...



BINTI Director Frederike Migom

#### Dancing off the beat

We meet producer Katleen Goossens (Bulletproof Cupid) on the set in a quiet and fancy neighbourhood in the Antwerp suburbs. „This street is a popular film location. People here are used to the presence of film crews. The owners of this house are extremely relaxed about things, while actually we are turning the whole building upside down. We also filmed at the airport in full holiday season, which appeared to be rather complicated. Since 9/11 airports have become less keen on such challenges. Moreover in times of full capacity, all airplanes are in use.“

Today a dance scene is recorded. According to the script, musician Baloji





should clumsily dance off the beat. Director Frederike Migom energetically shows how she wants it to be done and boosts the actors' energy level. As demanding as passionate, she feels like a fish in water on her first feature set. Migom: „I love working with actors. Especially the children should feel relaxed on set. Bebel Tshiani (Binti) and Mo Bakker (Elias) are the best. Discipline, professionalism, perseverance, cheerfulness... they have it all. They have flair, they fit together on screen and their acting is excellent.“

### Full time bogeyman

Children's coach An Vandeveldde: „Child actors might often feel a bit lost and displaced on a film set. Not with BINTI! I am their 24/7 intermedi-

ary with the director. I once worked for an English production, where rules are much stricter and children under all circumstances must have access to their private toilet and relaxation room. Here things are a bit more loose. On the second shooting day we did this very emotional scene, with an interrogation in a police car. The air conditioning had to be switched off and together with the temperature emotions were rising. Afterwards they needed a break. What is so nice about this set is that such things are possible at any time when needed.“

On the set An Vandeveldde's role is much bigger than 'a fancy babysitter in disguise'. With her background in theatre, she helps the children preparing for their roles. „I am proud of

this position, but I don't want to be a full time bogeyman. Some days I keep more distance, actors and crew members themselves must learn to take responsibility.“

### Decriminalising

For Frederike Migom, BINTI is a platform to pass on her message of social commitment. „I want to decriminalise the phenomenon of illegal immigrant workers. Often these families are striving for a normal life here.“ Baloji, playing the role of Binti's father (and actually being Bebel's father in real life), agrees. „This children's film brings up plenty of things that are relevant to an adult audience. It is a story about integration and about lives that are broken by political decisions. We have not won that battle yet; there is still work to be done.“ In Belgium he is known as a socially inspired rap-

per and mentor of a whole generation of young musicians.

All the time a burning sun is hanging over the film set. But the house next door has a swimming pool and there is a promise that by the end of the day, they'll all be allowed to take a dip in the cool water. That motivates them now. Frederike Migom: „The heat is somehow problematic for us. Last week we filmed a street party at 35° C with many extras (the whole neighbourhood showed up) costumes, dance sequences, two cameras... that was intense. A lot of hard work has been done, but I truly enjoy it. Everyone seems to feel comfortable and happy, which will surely shine through in the final result.“ Look forward to the next spring season (Belgian domestic release: April 3rd), when all those shiny happy actors can be seen in a movie that is full of colour, vital energy and social empowerment.

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Gert Hermans

