



**European Children's
Film Association**
Association Européenne du Cinéma
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

interviews

Romy's Salon

**Latte and the Magic
Waterstone**

**Aïlo - A Lapland
Odyssey**

**The Club of Ugly
Children**

**Kings of Mulberry
Street**

Afterlife

Journal

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CELEBRATE THE INFO

If meeting people is really so important, then the last few months must have been among the most important in our lives. People have met at the KIDS Regio Forum in Weimar, Fest of Fests in Athens, the Schlingel Industry Forum in Chemnitz and Cinekid for Professionals in Amsterdam... Every time, within the murmur of a buzzing swarm of professionals, the same phrases kept popping up:

- *"We need more information, statistics, facts and figures."*
- *"ECFA and KIDS Regio should work closer together."*

One + one is two. Yes, ECFA and KIDS Regio will together aim for a better spreading of research results. Facts and figures indeed. The information is out there, and joining forces will help us to find it, select it and spread it. Together, we'll have an information celebration! That's the title of a new column that you'll find from now on in every ECFA Journal (see page 13 in this edition), in which KIDS Regio will guide you towards new surveys and research reports. The respective documents will be made available on our websites.

This is a call to all of you, commissioning or working on research, to share your findings through our network. Your facts and figures

might mean more to your international colleagues than you think.

Several ECFA members have recently responded to our communication survey. In general, the results were very encouraging (details will be shared with members). Thank you for your trust in ECFA as a communicator. Now it's up to us to respond to your recommendations, already in this edition. You asked for more insights from industry experts, we give you: Maciej Jakubczyk from New Horizons, a company represented in every branch of the children's film industry and Jan-Willem Bult, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of UNICEF's Convention of the Rights of the Child. Another new column, curated by the Youth Cinema Network, will pay attention to young people making their own films.

Thus, ECFA is trying to serve as many needs as possible. As always... with your help!

—
Gert Hermans

ECFA members, save the date! ECFA is hoping to welcome you at their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Berlin on Saturday 22 February 2020 at 16.30.

Mischa Kamp & Tamara Bos about ROMY'S SALON

“Bakers and butchers are disappearing, but hair salons are still there”

Every day after school, 10 year old Romy reluctantly stays with her grandma, who works as a hairdresser and has her own salon. Grandma Stine, stiff and strict, has no time for her granddaughter. Until Romy realises that grandma often is messing things up. Gradually they grow closer while Romy is helping her with the new cash register.

ROMY'S SALON is a heart-felt story about a grandchild standing strong when grandma is showing symptoms of dementia. Script author Tamara Bos (MINOES, WINKY'S HORSE, FIDGETY BRAM) and director Mischa Kamp (WINKY'S HORSE, BOYS), delicately explain exactly where the story comes from.

Tamara Bos: When my grandmother started showing symptoms of early dementia, it turned out that I handled the situation very differently than my mother. At that time an older lady was running a hair salon in my neighbourhood. Every day after school, a little

girl came to visit her. Combining those two elements, a whole new, very feminine universe took shape in my imagination. I enjoyed telling a story about an older woman still running her own business.

That's how a hair salon became your main location.

Mischa Kamp: To shoot a film in a real hair salon, you have to rent the place for 10 days, which is very expensive. But this was a real barber shop that was for sale.

Bos: The interior design was from the 70s. Which was great, as in the film it had to look a bit outdated. After all, the salon - and its demolition - partly symbolises grandma's degeneration.

Do you have a soft spot for hair salons?

Kamp: Bakers and butchers are disappearing, but hair salons are still there. You'll notice it when travelling through the country: no matter which village you go, there is always a hairdresser.



Bos: And a Chinese restaurant! That is what the film has in common with WINKY'S HORSE.

It is a world in its own, with its very own rituals.

Kamp: Making coffee, a bowl of candy on the counter, shelves full of curlers, gossip magazines... all these things are still there today in every barber shop.

Bos: I enjoy integrating such elements in my story. Hairdressing requires professional skills. Luckily Beppie Melissen (in the role of grandma Stine)

herself rarely had to cut hair, because one might look really clumsy when trying.

It's a place where matters are generally discussed among adults. In the opening scene we see how Romy does not take part in that world.

Bos: She is always surrounded by adults, at the salon, at home, at the truck stop. Such images make clear that this child, living in a world of grown-ups, has to deal with adult issues.



Grandma isn't doing very well. Children seem to understand that. How did you make that so clear, without explaining or naming it?

Kamp: You don't slide into dementia overnight. The truth is in the details: a doctor's visit, the inability to calculate numbers, Romy discovering at night that grandma is not at home... In that scene we understand that grandma begins to realise what is going on. The story is told through the eyes of a child going through a process step by step.

Bos: Meeting with Marie previously, grandma's client who drops by now and then, children already understand that there are people who seem extremely confused. And there is the strong image of grandma, sitting in her own dressing chair when returning from the hospital. She gives in, the fight is over.

It is strange that this strict grandma is only capable of tenderness once the disease strikes.

Kamp: Together with Beppie, I visited some old people's homes. We met very angry seniors, but also a lot of elderly people giggling. The transformation from "angry" to "pretty sweet" is not exceptional.

Bos: My grandma became much soft-

er than I had ever known her before. She always used to be very busy and suddenly she sat in a chair and told me a story about an old love, or took my hand. She wanted to buy a very expensive pepper mill for me - I still have it.

Did you do a lot of research?

Bos: I read a lot about the subject and watched documentaries, like one by Louis Theroux - the statement "*I am a hairdresser*" literally quotes from his film, in which a man says "*I AM a dentist*".

What Grandma and Romy have in common is that decisions are often taken for them by others and they have little say in their own destiny.

Bos: The film is about accepting that you do not have everything under control. Some things just happen, and you have to learn to let go. We did not want to make a *jolly alzheimer film* with grandma acting all funny. In ROMY'S SALON things are going wrong in a dramatically build up story. With the scenes in the Danish holiday home, where grandma gets extremely confused, we finally let go of the idea of 'a big audience film'.

But you also added some cosy el-

ements, like Jens the cat. A real "hairdresser's cat" with beautiful long hair.

Kamp: Together with grandma, the cat goes a long way throughout the story: first locked up, later she enters the salon and is finally taken home by Romy. That cat was very old and perfectly trained. When positioning him somewhere on the set, he would stay put, take after take, with everyone standing around. He was incredible!

Vita Heijmen plays her role in a modest, introverted way.

Kamp: Vita is not a calm girl at all, she is extremely busy. Between two takes she was jumping and skipping all the time. Only when I yelled "action" she immediately blended into her role. The first day on the set was thrilling. I wasn't sure if my instructions got through to her, as she was constantly bouncing up and down. But with every take became clear that she took all my comments with her into that scene.

Most impressive is Beppie Melissen. She realises very well that you recognise dementia mainly by the look in a person's eyes.

Kamp: Beppie was really going all the way. Sometimes we did seven takes, in increasing degrees of intensity, to

see how far we wanted to go. Only for the scenes in which she had to swim in the sea, while the water was not warmer than 10 °, we used two stand-ins, trained cold-water swimmers. In those scenes you see two pairs of Danish buttocks - not Beppie's.

A scene that sincerely shocked me was the demolition of the hair salon. That is how carelessly we deal with things from the past?

Bos: A whole life thrown away, your stuff is collected, thrown out and voila... you're gone. It would be nice if we suddenly cut to 20 years later and there is Romy, shining happy in her brand new hair salon. Deep in my heart I would like it to be that way, but that's not how life is, unfortunately.

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Gert Hermans

World Sales: Attraction Distribution,
info@attractiondistribution.ca

Regina Welker & Nina Wels about LATTE AND THE MAGIC WATERSTONE

“Eating worms and bugs is part of a hedgehog’s life”

Now the animals are suffering from a water shortage, young reckless hedgehog girl Latte clumsily spills the last drops of water. When all the animals gather in an emergency meeting, the raven tells them about Bantur, the Bear King, who stole the magic waterstone. Latte has no other option than believing the story and courageously embarks on a quest. On her journey through the forest, she is joined by her best friend Tjum. But being friends with a stubborn girl like Latte is not always easy.

We meet both directors of the ambitious looking animated feature right after the film’s world premiere at the Schlingel Festival.

On their quest, Latte and Tjum meet all sorts of animals, each one of them with a different style and characterisation in its body movement. Are these movements animal-based or character-based?

Regina Welker: Character-based. Not all characters could be on four legs. A

hedgehog walking on four legs would have its head bowed to the ground all the time, you would never be able to see its facial expression. Rabbits and wolves can sit with their heads upwards to the camera, like they do in reality. But we can’t have them standing on two feet, like a squirrel. For Bantur the Bear King, it looks totally natural to stand upright. Finally we aimed for the optimal combination of all those human and natural elements.

In general you try to stick as close as possible to the animals’ natural behaviour.

Nina Wels: Animals don’t live in houses, they live in nests and caves. We didn’t add any human elements to the scenery. Eating worms and bugs is part of a hedgehog’s life, so that’s what Latte does. We thought kids might find the idea rather gross, but in the premiere they simply loved it.

Welker: Only in one scene this approach caused us difficulties. When Tjum is returning home, sounds were needed suggesting that inside the



nest dinner was prepared. Instead of the usual pots, pans and dishes, the sound coming from the nest is the cracking of nut shells.

How to put an expression on a hedgehog’s face?

Welker: Since a hedgehog’s nose is so long, Latte’s mouth would always remain hidden. We cheated a bit with proportions to give her an expressive mouth in a lovable face. Hedgehogs are not afraid to noisily stumble into

all sorts of situations, as they carry their natural protection with them. With this armour of spikes, Latte is always ready for a confrontation. When she has something on her mind, she won’t let go until she gets what she wants. She is cute, but tough.

Wels: Her facial expressions are clear and simple so that everybody can easily read them.

Being such a brave girl, still Latte calls herself ‘a princess’. Why do



girls always have to be princesses?

Welker: Because there is something special about her, something royal. Which puts her on an equal level with the Bear King. Although he seems so scary, Latte easily connects with him. In the original book by Sebastian Lybeck, Latte was a boy. Now the gender has changed, but Latte's spirit remains the same: a strong – so called – boyish attitude. But with all these boyish assets, she can still be a princess, she can totally decide herself what she wants to be.

Wels: She is the outsider, different from all the others, proving that she is worth her royal status.

Five years ago, everyone was in awe watching your first trailer at Sola Media. Ever since the animation design has changed drastically.

Welker: That funding trailer was a hard nut to crack: starting from scratch, with no budget and only two weeks to deliver. Holding on to that style would have been impossible. All those painted backgrounds were not compatible for 3D. For a feature animation, efficiency is needed.

Wels: Especially since the production grew so big. We had a crew of 500 people working on this film in Germany, Belgium and India.

And two directors, probably both adding different dynamics to the project.

Wels: As directors we should be truthful and authentic, carrying the audience into our vision. If they don't believe in what we're doing, we'll lose them. We need to put everything we have into our characters. Since all emotions are transmitted onto the screen through the animators, a deep understanding of the characters is needed.

Welker: *"You can only make the film that you can make,"* as is often said.

The music is impressive, symphonic and therefore very ambitious.

Welker: Animation directors in general are obsessed with details, like one fingertip moving, or one twinkle in a squirrel's eye. This focus we recognised in the work of composer Andreas Hoge. He noticed every detail - a wolf waving its paw, a bear nodding at the king – and implemented them in the score. It all adds to the magic. Recording the soundtrack with the Leipziger Symphonic Orchestra was a fantastic experience.

What was the most complicated scene, in terms of animation?

Welker: The chase scene with the lynx, with two four legged characters hop-



ping through a huge set.

Wels: All had to be done within the limitations of our set. There were about 20 trees standing around a clearing, and there was a choreography, with animals running up and down in different directions. In terms of perspectives you could say there is some cheating involved that nobody notices.

It paid off rather well.

Welker: It was lovely to see how much fun the kids had with that scene. It contains so much tension that afterwards they felt a need to be relieved. Did you hear them laughing when finally a tree falls upon the lynx's head? Wels: A filmmaker need to find that balance. You don't want to scare your young audience to death, and neither do you want them to run out of the cinema crying.

LATTE AND THE MAGIC WATERSTONE premieres in German theatres on 25th December.

During the ECFA Seminar at the Schlingel Festival, producer Lilian Klages (Dreamin' Dolphin Film) gave a lecture on her production work for LATTE AND THE MAGIC WATERSTONE. *"Since it takes at least five years to finish a film, I only want to get involved in a project if there's something in the story that attracts me personally, something that I really care for. This book is about 'life, love and the miracle of living together on this planet', in a charming story about taking care of nature's resources."*

Contact [Dreamin' Dolphin Film](#).

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Gert Hermans

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Guillaume Maidatchevsky about AÏLO – A LAPLAND ODDYSSEY

“The movie is my answer to a taxi driver”

AÏLO – A LAPLAND ODDYSSEY follows a young reindeer on his first steps into an icy world, above the Arctic Circle. It takes Aïlo only five minutes to get on his feet, in the next five minutes he learns to walk, and then later to swim and run through the snow. All this, we observe at close range, on a journey through a grandiose terrain, that Aïlo shares with other wild animals. Some of them are hilariously funny, and all of them are fascinating.

We meet Guillaume Maidatchevsky at the Zlin Festival, immediately after his screening. “The audience laughed a lot. After spending 200 days outdoors in Lapland filming in -40°C, hearing that laughter is an amazing reward!”

Whenever switching on Discovery Channel, you'll always come across someone hunting sharks or saving lions. This film is about an animal that might easily go unnoticed.

Guillaume Maidatchevsky: Despite all the wildlife documentaries I made about lions and elephants, one day my children told me: “You’ve never made

a film about Santa’s reindeer!” Indeed, I realised my children are much better informed about the animals of the savannah than about European fauna. AÏLO was somehow made by order of my kids!

Were they also the reason why you choose a narrative format?

Maidatchevsky: I made many wildlife documentaries before, but with this one I wanted to reach out to a new audience. There is a bunch of loyal wildlife fans watching every story about the animal kingdom. But using dramaturgy and adding an emotional layer, I might be able to create awareness among people who are less familiar with the genre. AÏLO is a tale, which allows me more freedom and empathy. This film has a story. The audience is not with “the reindeer”, they are with Aïlo. I am interested in the individual, more than in the species.

You approached every animal in the film as an individual?

Maidatchevsky: We were always shooting with one of the animals



as our point of view. Each morning I spoke to my small crew: “*Today we are a wolverine, we will move and think like a wolverine. The camera will be the wolverine’s eyes.*”

How can you write a script that is depending upon the unpredictable ways of nature?

Maidatchevsky: Every scene was somehow planned in an 80-pages long script. You should see that script as a straight line, from which deviations can occur. For example, you know a female animal will give birth, but you can’t predict exactly how and when. Filming an animal is like filming a child, you do not hold it back, you simply need to be patient.

It was a deliberate choice to film a prey instead of a hunter?

Maidatchevsky: Filming lions is boring. You always know how the story ends - he’ll make the kill, he’s the king. That’s it. From a dramatic point of view, prey are much more interesting, they always need to look over their shoulders and be afraid.

Aïlo enters the stage as an anti-hero. His mother is considering to leave the calf right after she gave birth.

Maidatchevsky: Aïlo takes a rather bad start in life. But troublesome characters often are the most interesting. For 10 days we were following a group of pregnant females, hoping to film one of them giving birth. All of



them were extra cautious, except one that would follow us everywhere. One day she left the herd and gave birth to a calf, five metres away from us. And then... she left. What we witnessed was the struggle between survival instinct and motherhood. These were honest emotions. Animals don't lie.

It seems like both mother and son trusted you completely.

Maidatchevsky: The moment Aïlo opened his eyes he saw his mother, he saw the herd... and he saw us. For him we were a part of the group. His mother passed on her confidence to him. Prey animals in general are anxious, but he did not care at all, he was curious and relaxed.

Was there a risk you would get too familiar with him?

Maidatchevsky: The main rule is: never touch the animal! I could watch him from very close, but touching him would be like breaking a barrier. He is a wild animal.

Where exactly was the film shot?

Maidatchevsky: Both in Norway and Finland. Norway is when you see the mountains, Finland is when you see flat land and forests. During their migration, reindeer are crossing the frontier. We followed their track on

snow scooters, but in the vicinity of the set we used skis. We had to be discreet.

Not to wake up the bears?

Maidatchevsky: We had to be really careful. Our camouflage tent had a six metres high chimney to drain off the human smell, so it wouldn't be picked up by bears.

There's other characters more eccentric than bears. Like the wolverine...

Maidatchevsky: Initially we planned him as a modest side character. A wolverine is a predator, a dangerous sniper. With a pack of ten wolves standing around a carcass, when the wolverine arrives, he'll chase them all away. But when this ultimate bad guy spots a female specimen, he goes berserk, rolling over and acting silly. Who has ever seen that before? Just like that stoat, going crazy. It was almost impossible to catch him on film, as he was moving so fast, like Scrat from the ICE AGE films.

I heard you referring to that movie more often.

Maidatchevsky: ICE AGE is interesting in its depiction of nature's cuties versus bad predators. After all, nature isn't that cute. Juxtaposing 'the sweet



Director Guillaume Maidatchevsky

reindeer' and 'the big bad wolf' would be a lie. For all the so called 'bad guys' in AïLO, there is room for the audience to empathise with them.

The environmental debate is somehow inherent to this film. You depict deforestation machines as some sort of evil predators.

Maidatchevsky: The environmental discourse is becoming sterile, as we're hearing it every day. I belong to the Miyazaki school: *"Amazing the audience, is like encouraging them to protect."* Awareness might come if children will bond with Aïlo. Only then they might realise: What a pity if all this would disappear. A Finnish taxi driver asked me: *"Why a film about a reindeer? Reindeer are stupid!"* Consider this movie an answer to that taxi

driver.

What is your next project?

Maidatchevsky: I am considering two new projects. One is a fictional story against poaching, set in South Africa. By including human protagonists in a film about wildlife, I will no longer put my entire faith in the paws of unpredictable animals. And I'm planning another 'Northern documentary' about arctic foxes. The working title is KINA & UK. Shot in Canada and Alaska, this film will speak even more about climate change, because this has a huge impact on the lives of arctic foxes.

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Gert Hermans

AATOS AND THE WORLD

Who is the boss of the gods? Or is there only one god? Questions of existential gravity concern Aatos greatly. The film focuses on the six year old Finnish boy, who is infatuated with the gods of Norse mythology like Thor, and on his friends Amine and Flo. Amine is a Muslim, and Flo does not believe in any god at all, but in nature. They all call Molenbeek their home, a multi-ethnic Brussels suburb. The well received AATOS AND THE WORLD is the short version of the feature length film GODS OF MOLENBEEK.

Finnish director Reetta Huhtanen accompanies the bright and open-minded friends roaming around in the courtyard or at the dinner table. We follow them discovering different ways of thinking about religion and god(s). However, the conversation always remains driven by curiosity, never by suspicion. The camera reflects Aatos's determination of navigating the vast oceans of religious peculiarities. He is continuously contemplating and weighing in on the religious environment surrounding him, deter-

mined to seek out what his own god could be.

However, the film offers more than playful shots or ideological pondering against the backdrop of police in the streets, security announcements and demonstrations against terrorist attacks. While fooling around, Flo amusingly declares *"If you believe in God, you are crazy. And if you go crazy, you should warn me."* Contrasts like these lend a certain comedic undertone to the documentary, hence lightening its atmosphere.

Huhtanen's immersive style wonderfully portrays the children's friendship. All interactions and inquiries feel natural and authentic. They have room to express themselves freely, the camera usually filming from a lower angle with the lens tilted upwards. By staying as close as possible to the children's point of view, the audience experiences Aatos's journey as one of his peers. We quickly understand his search for his own god is nothing to look down upon, quite literally, but to respect. The film creates a safe space,



a world where questions of existential gravity can be discussed without fearing stepping on anyone's toes. It is a great example of how to introduce thoughts about God, gods and religion to a young audience. Don't worry, your toes will be fine.

In this year's doxs! festival, next to the well-established GROSSE KLAPPE award and the ECFA Doc Award, a new award was introduced for the "Best Foreign Language Documentary", with AATOS AND THE WORLD as the first laureate.

Director: Reetta Huhtanen; producer: Hannu-Pekka Vitikainen (Zone2 Pictures); co-produced by Hanne Phlypo, Alex Tondowski & Iris Pakulla.

World sales: CAT&Docs; Contact: cat@catndocs.com. Finland, Belgium, Germany, 25'.

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the doxs! festival for children & youth documentaries. The 18th doxs!-festival took place from 4-10 November 2019 in Duisburg and other cities in the Ruhr Area. www.doxs.de.



Jonathan Elbers about THE CLUB OF UGLY CHILDREN

“All our lines are all stolen from leaders who are currently in power”

“Keep it clean!” President Isimo’s slogan does not only refer to the city streets but also to the people. Whoever doesn’t fit into his perfect picture will be deported. Like Paul and some of his “ugly looking” classmates. Paul escapes and goes underground. The rebel movement prepares a national uprising, but a bounty hunter is sent to hunt them down. Dystopian science fiction is not the most popular among children’s film genres. When watching THE CLUB OF UGLY CHILDREN you might wonder why not.

Seven years ago you shot a short graduation film, which you have now remade into a full-length feature. The idea behind that film has grown increasingly relevant throughout that period.

Jonathan Elbers: My graduation film was a funny parody - I created a kind of childish version of North Korea. Meanwhile, a strange man has taken

power in the US and regimes in Russia and Turkey have evolved. Populism and dictatorship can be felt from close-by in Europe. Reality caught up with us and this has made my film more political, and more harsh. All President Isimo’s speeches literally quote the words of Trump, Erdogan, Putin etc. We have added our own notion of beautiful versus ugly, but those lines are all stolen from leaders who are currently in power.

The ideal of beauty has also become an increasingly suffocating element for youngsters.

Elbers: Public opinion was very sensitive about that. *“There is no such thing as ugly children.”* Oh no? You should see my high school pictures, with my braces and nerdy glasses. And what if we had made a film about the Club of Beautiful Children? Would that have been problematic? Wouldn’t that be like making a distinction? Beauty is



an obsession, also on Instagram, Tinder etc. that you cannot name. When filming commercials, I am witnessing a meat inspection with people being rejected because of having the wrong earlobe. Our slogan was: everyone is ugly in their own way.

The title sounds provocative. Calling someone “ugly” is hurtful.

Elbers: We sent out a news item: “Club of ugly children looking for ugly children.” A flood of indignant reactions immediately started, although the film contains a positive message. Everything was explained in detail to the young actors. We didn’t feel at all like showcasing them as ugly. They were all proud to participate. That

“club of ugly children” is actually an honorary title for those who dare to resist.

At the casting they already knew what they were up to?

Elbers: We haven’t cast particularly weird looking children, most of them looked rather ordinary. In the end I simply chose the best actor for each role. More than 3000 children submitted a video in which they often immediately told what they found ugly about themselves: a birthmark, a strange finger... In the end, everyone is sometimes uncertain about their appearance. Some candidates were actually bullied for real, like the red-haired boy who becomes a leader of



the uprising. He did turn his negative experiences into something positive - I think that is so brave! Other candidates at the audition struggled so hard with their appearance that they finally didn't feel ready for acting.

The title sounds jolly, but the film is anything but non committing.

Elbers: So many films are made in the Netherlands about a cosy school on a dyke in a small village. We tightened things up a bit, like STRANGER THINGS for youngsters, so to speak. But actually it's just a good versus bad story. You see at first glance that the president is a bad guy, although that is not the way politics are practiced in general. Today even the worst dictator knows how to wrap up his message like a heavenly truth. THE CLUB OF UGLY CHILDREN is an exciting adventure film full of thrilling chases that can be enjoyed by kids from the age of 6. They don't notice the extra layer to the story, and that's okay. But older children often understand the references to WWII and to regimes that don't allow you to be who you are.

Which is clear from the very start.

Elbers: The opening scene with the passport photos makes your stomach shrink - this world is not a fun place



to be. There is no room for individuality in this society. In a beautiful country, everyone has given up personal freedom for prosperity and efficiency. Everybody must look the way President Isimo wants them to, deviant appearances will not be tolerated. That message is communicated through songs, billboards and social media. This is something children in our world experience on a daily basis via YouTube and Instagram.

The design of the film is grey and sleek.

Elbers: We travelled throughout the Netherlands in search of grey buildings, that we stripped down from all further cosiness, and to which we added even more grey. The spectacular settings for the 'grand finale' we found in Duisburg-North, an area full of abandoned industrial complexes. A true playground for the stunt team, but not for me, although all those

stunts have (temporarily) cured me from my fear of heights.

Thus the war in the film also becomes a war of colours.

Elbers: Grey stands for "not having the right to be who you really are". Only with the uprising, colours start entering the film and the images begin to breathe. In the paint shop where the rebels go into hiding, you can't buy anything but white, black, grey and red paint. But in the basement they find an oasis of colour and cosiness, and a girl wearing a yellow nightgown. As if people had saved these kind of clothes from a previous life, awaiting the great liberation.

How do adults respond to the film?

Elbers: Rather intense. Such a scene in which children are hauled off in a container is perceived very differently by adults. Just like the scene in which a news anchor doubts whether he dares

to tell the truth. With the TV news evolving into an official state news bulletin, he needs to decide whether he is man enough to revolt. First he must announce the president, then he must accuse his wife and daughter and finally call his son a terrorist.

There are a number of mass scenes in the film. How did you keep control over that crowd?

Elbers: We filmed the big uprising on the first shooting day! I had asked the extras to make banners and to look colourful. When they arrived on set, I got emotional, seeing how much effort they had put into it! Theatre teachers usually are skilled in working with large groups of people. They rehearsed the scenes with the children beforehand. As you can see in the close-ups: this is not a bunch of kids quickly doing the job, they really think along with the story.

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Gert Hermans

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ECFA Seminar @ schlingel Industry Forum

Schlingel director Michael Harbauer: "When putting a festival programme together, we often wonder what will happen to all these films once the festival is over? What role can we play to offer them a longer life in cinema's? And which other industry players and tools can help us to achieve that goal?"



These questions were discussed on 7th & 8th October, when industry representatives gathered at the Schlingel Festival (Chemnitz, Germany), attending the ECFA Seminar as a part of the Industry Forum. The full report of the seminar, with a follow-up to the Weimar Declaration, thought-provoking quotes and a list of suggestions and focus points can be found [here](#).

What is the ideal amount of children's films to be produced in one country? What about countries like Germany? Do they have too many titles produced (divided attention) or can there never be enough films on the market?



"Forget about children, focus on teachers!"



Festivals are brands. We should be more proud about that, and actively lobby for ourselves. We can't raise the importance given to our work, if we don't tell the world how important it is." but you have to keep the gun ready under the table."

About 'the art of being a producer': *"Co-producing is like a marriage, but without the kissing. While working together on a project for several years, you need to be able to communicate, to fight, to forgive and to understand. And you can smile at each other when sitting around the table, but you have to keep the gun ready under the table."*



A festival should be a special experience, the "cinema experience". But what about the audience that is not able to attend a festival? If festivals are a window to the world, sometimes you have to take that window with you, and bring it to places where children don't have access to the cinema so easily *"If you can't bring the audience to the festival, bring the festival to the audience"* to serve the unserved audience.



"Inviting politicians to festivals together with their families, can help to make an impact."



Answering the call of the Weimar Declaration, KIDS Regio committed to “extending and improving research” and closed a pact with ECFA regarding a better spreading of data and research results. KIDS Regio will publish a selection of reports on its website and will guide you in every ECFA Journal towards new, relevant information. Here and now, we jointly aim for an ‘Information Celebration’.

A Study on European Children’s Film

A study on numbers, challenges and questions about European Children’s Film is now available. The study was commissioned by KIDS Regio and ex-

ecuted by Dr. Steffi Ebert. They have been cooperating for several years on the collection of data on European Children’s Film. The study provides an in-depth look at the production and performance of European Children’s Film.

One of the conclusions from the collected data is that the production growth in children’s film production is smaller in comparison to the overall European production growth. Although, children’s films only make up around 6% of all European productions, they account for 10.7% of all admissions. This is however due to the achievement of animated films.



This is a call to all of you, commissioning or working on research, to share your findings through our network. Your facts and figures might mean more to your international colleagues than you think. Let us know about your big or small research projects and get in touch with journal@ecfaweb.org or with project manager Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio), schultka@kids-regio.org

Live action films show lower growth in production and reach a smaller audience.

For more data, statistics and conclusions, Steffi Ebert’s study ‘European Children’s Films. Numbers, Challenges and Questions’ can now be consulted on the [KIDS Regio website](#). Together with several other research projects, the study was recently presented at Cinekid for Professionals (see pictures).



The ‘Information Celebration’ section is curated by KIDS Regio, a lobby initiative for high quality and multi-faceted European Children’s Films. It functions as an agent between policy and society, the film industry and the scientific world in order to form a network and discuss new synergies.

Maciej Jakubczyk (New Horizons): “For box office revenues we count on only a few titles”

Very few film distributors have their own name branded as a label. But in Poland, when describing a title as “a New Horizons film”, everybody will know what that means: artistically challenging cinema, often for a young audience. With a festival, a distribution label, an industry forum, a development programme, a cinema, an education department etc. New Horizons might be represented on just about every level of the children’s film industry.

Maciej Jakubczyk, driving force behind the New Horizons label, hosted the recent Warsaw Kids Film Forum with flair. Sitting in the front row, he might have a clear view on the latest trends and tendencies in the European children’s film industry.

Why is it important to have the Forum here in Warsaw?

Maciej Jakubczyk: In countries like Poland there are a few producers convinced they want to produce children’s films, there are a few producers convinced that they don’t want to

produce children’s films, and there is a majority of producers who might consider producing for children. Those are the ones that would not go actively searching for kids’ content abroad. But if the content is here, they will come and find out about successful European projects. That might convince them.

Warsaw is strategically placed on the map of Europe.

Jakubczyk: The Forum is an intermediary for small local companies that seldom have access to decision makers on the big markets. By facilitating personal meetings, we connect East and West, we connect experienced and less experienced players. Besides Cinekid, Malmö and Riga, not many international forums are open for live action kids content. Our projects mainly come from regions that are not well represented in the existing forums, like Southern Europe, while production is emerging there.

How to measure the third edition of the Forum in terms of growth?

Jakubczyk: We’re not aiming for more participants. With 200 people we can create an atmosphere in which personal contacts are possible. But every year we have decision makers from more and more important companies. And the number of one-on-one meetings is improving, which indicates that we’ve been selecting the right projects.

Based on those selected projects, did you point out certain new children’s film tendencies?

Jakubczyk: We see a growth in pre-school projects targeting the very youngest (2-4 years) audience. And still – and I wonder if this tradition will ever get outdated – European producers want to make live action features, even if that is becoming more difficult in terms of funding and theatrical releases.

Does the Forum somehow shift attention away from the festival event?

Jakubczyk: It is rather the other way around. In general it is difficult to



Maciej Jakubczyk at the Forum

attract industry people to children’s film festivals. But professionals visiting the Forum, they breathe the festival atmosphere, they see children entering the theatres. That is exactly what the festival stands for. When watching films together with children, you feel their energy and enthusiasm. We don’t want to move with the Forum to a modern conference hall, we prefer to stay in Cinema Muranow, where the festival’s scenography is omnipresent. Muranow is very much an art-house cinema, but due to the festival parents nowadays recognise it also as a children’s cinema.



You have a great audience, that actively engages with the films.

Jakubczyk: We've invested from the very beginning in educating the parents, through workshops and lectures. At the same time we like to challenge children and get them out of their comfort zone. In our 'Discovery Section' we're screening titles on the edge of art-house and children's film.

The main festival competition on the other hand is a showcase for the New Horizons distribution catalogue. Will all competition titles have guaranteed distribution in Poland?

Jakubczyk: That is part of our concept. Under the given circumstances, with European children's films rarely being distributed and hardly finding an audience, we want to make a long term investment in every title. We don't want to limit these films' careers to a certain festival time and place. We've acquired the rights for every film in the main competition.

Does the festival travel outside Warsaw?

Jakubczyk: The Audience Award is voted simultaneously in 22 cities! After the festival, one by one the films



DOUBLE TROUBLE

get a theatrical release – big or small – and afterwards they'll enter the educational circuit, which is organised in 80 cities. Those educational screenings are conceived as *"quality meetings with the audience"* with lectures, teaching materials etc. The festival is a test case for our catalogue. It is crucial to see which titles from the programme are easily picked up by the audience.

Any particular expectations for the upcoming distribution season?

Jakubczyk: We'll soon be releasing GORDEN & PADDY and this winter RACE TIME and THE FAMOUS INVASION OF THE BEARS IN SICILY will follow. New Horizons is dependent on box office revenues, therefore we

count on only a few titles. Films like THE BEARS IN SICILY, which is more of a semi-art-house movie than a regular family film, are mainly there to emphasise the kind of quality we want to offer to children.

This is also the starting point for a new initiative: the Kids Kino Lab.

Jakubczyk: For this new co-development programme, we have found well-established partners like the Zlin Film Festival (Czech Republic), the Athens Children's Film Festival (Greece) and AleKino (Poland). The programme includes a travelling series of four workshops with producers and scriptwriters over a course of 10 months, in which we'll develop feature films and TV series from synopsis

into a draft script. The project is open for live action, documentary and animated films.

Do you have the feeling that all these initiatives have an impact on the Polish children's film landscape of today?

Jakubczyk: The Polish Film Institute nowadays has a yearly allocation for kids content. Recently the most popular movie in Polish cinemas was DOUBLE TROUBLE by Marta Karwowska, an alumni of our development programme. DOUBLE TROUBLE is an original brand with a new episode (TRIPLE TROUBLE) currently in the making. With an original script, a small-scale story and a less than € 1 million budget, they sold 350,000 tickets. The industry needed such an incentive that children's films can be worth investing. This is not yet the moment for investing in art-house films for children, they wouldn't spin the wheel of production. But after a few more box office successes there will be space for a different type of kids content too.

–
Gert Hermans

11 Children from Morshyn

Feature, Ukraine 2019

Director: Arkadiy Nepytyaliuk
 Prod. & World Sales: Solar Media Entertainment
 Phone: ++38-067-670-80-46
info@solarmedia.biz

The Club of Ugly Children

Feature, The Netherlands, 2019

Director: Jonathan Elbers
 Prod.: Umami Media, Shooting Star Film Company
 World Sales: Beta Cinema
 Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80
beta@betafilm.com
www.betafilm.com
 Festival contact: Renate Zylla,
RZylla@arcor.de



Diva of Finland

Feature, Finland & Norway, 2019

Director: Maria Veijalainen
 Prod.: Silva Mysterium
 World Sales: Svensk Filmindustri
 Phone: ++46-86-80-35-00
international@sf.se

www.sfinternational.se

Elcano & Magellan: The First Voyage around the World

Animation, Spain, 2019

Director: Angel Alonso
 Prod.: Dibulitoon Studio, Televisión Española
 World Sales: Filmax Int.
 Phone: ++34-933-36-85-55
filmxint@filmax.com
www.filmax.com

The Efkins – Baking a Difference

Animation, Germany, 2019

Director: Ute von Münchow-Pohl
 Prod.: Akkord Film Prod., ZDF
 World Sales: Sola Media
 Phone: ++49-711-96-89-44-40
post@sola-media.com
www.sola-media.com



Fantastic Return to Oz

Animation, Russia 2019

Director: Fjodor Dmitriew

Prod.: Melnitsa Animation Studio
 World Sales: Wizart Animation
 Phone: ++7-499-201-21-62
hello@wizartanimation.com
www.wizartanimation.com

The Foundling

Feature Film, Russia, 2019

Director: Sergey Vasiliev
 Prod. & World Sales: Gorkiy Studio
 Phone: ++7-09-51-81-03-83
secretary@gorkyfilm.ru
www.gorkyfilm.ru

Fritzi – A Revolutionary Tale

Animation, Germany 2019

Directors: Ralf Kukula & Matthias Bruhn
 Prod.: Balance Film, TrickStudio Lutterbeck, Doghouse Films, a.o.
 World Sales: Global Screen
 Phone: ++49-89-24-41-29-55-00
info@globalscreen.de
www.globalscreen.de
www.fritzithemovie.com



Gooseboy

Feature Film, Denmark, 2019

Director: Michael Wikke & Steen Rasmussen
 Prod.: SF Film Prod., ApSSF Studios
 World Sales: Svensk Filmindustri
See information above

Latte and the Magic Waterstone

Animation, Germany, Belgium, 2019

Director: Regina Welker & Nina Wels
 Prod.: Dreamin' Dolphin Film, Eagle Eye Filmprod., Grid Animation
 World Sales: Sola Media
See information above

Maiden of the Lake

Documentary, Finland, 2019

Director: Petteri Saario
 Prod. & World Sales: Citizen Jane
 Phone: ++358-458-85-52-99
info@citizenjaneproductions.fi
www.citizenjaneproductions.fi/en/tuotannot/maiden-of-the-lake-2/

Monty and the Street Party

Animation, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, 2019

Directors: Anders Morgenthaler & Mikael Wulff
 Prod.: Zentropa Entertainments, New Creations
 World Sales: Trust Nordisk Film Int.
 Phone: ++45-36-86-87-88



info@trustnordisk.com
www.trustnordisk.com

The Most Annoying Island

Feature Film, The Netherlands, 2019
 Director: Albert Jan van Rees
 Prod. & World Sales: Nuts and Bolts
info@nutsbolts.nl
www.nutsbolts.nl

Motherland

Feature Film, Lithuania, Germany, Greece, 2019
 Director: Tomas Vengris
 Prod.: Studio Uljana Kim
 World Sales: Alpha Violet
 Phone: ++33-147-97-39-84
info@alphaviolet.com
www.alphaviolet.com

My Family and the Wolf



Feature Film, France, Belgium, 2019
 Director: Adria Garcia
 Prod.: Folivari, Nectarious Films, La Comp. Cinématographique, Panache Prod.
 World Sales: Charades Int. Sales

Phone: ++33-629-87-45-04
sales@charades.eu
www.charades.eu

My Name is Gennet

Docufiction, Spain, 2018
 Director: Miguel Ángel Tobías
 Prod. & World Sales: Acca Media Prod.
<https://en.fundaciontelefonica.com/education/me-llamo-gennet/>



Of Loves and Lies

Feature Film, France, Belgium, 2019
 Director: Julien Rappeneau
 Prod.: The Film
 World Sales: TF1 Studio
 Phone: ++33-1-41-41-21-68
sales@tf1.fr
www.tf1international.com

The Orphanage

Feature Film, Denmark, Germany, Afghanistan, a.o., 2019
 Director: Satad Shahrbanoo
 Prod.: Adomeit Film, Adomeit Germany, La Fabrica Nocturna, Samsa Film, Wolf Pictures

World Sales: LuxBox
 Phone: ++ 33-171-37-99-34
info@luxboxfilms.com
www.luxboxfilms.com

Rediscovery

Documentary, Denmark, 2019
 Director: Phie Ambo
 Prod. & World Sales: Hansen & Pedersen Film og Fjernsyn
 Phone: ++45-27-44-25-67
malene@hansenogpedersen.dk
www.hansenogpedersen.dk/productions/rediscovery/

Scent of Oranges

Feature Film, Czech Rep., Germany, Slovak Rep., 2019
 Director: Ivan Pokorny
 Prod.: Daniel Severa Prod., Kinderfilm, Trigon Prod.
 World Sales: Kinderfilm
 Phone: ++49-361-65-86-60
info@kinderfilm-gmbh.de
www.kinderfilm-gmbh.de



Spread Your Wings

Feature Film, France, 2019
 Directors: Nicolas Vanier
 Prod.: SND Groupe M6, Radar Films, Canopée Prod.
 World Sales: SND Groupe M6
 Phone: ++33-1-41-92-68-66
info@snd-films.fr
www.snd-films.fr



Stars by the Pound

Feature Film, France, 2019
 Director: Marie-Sophie Chambon
 Prod.: Koro Films, Umedia
 World Sales: Be for Films
 Phone: ++32-489-80-21-23
Pamela@beforfilms.com
www.beforfilms.com

More information on all these films you will find on our website:
www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films

Youth Cinema Network



As a result of a collaboration between ECFA and the Youth Cinema Network (YCN), ECFA Journal will give extra attention to youngsters' filmmaking. Every edition will make room for a short story from one of the YCN's members: a case study, workshop, collaboration or interview. To start with, we present you... the Youth Cinema Network!

What is Youth Cinema?

Films made by young people, using their right to express themselves through the moving image.

What is the Youth Cinema Network?

A worldwide network of 32 youth film festivals, 10 organisations and 9 film & media educators from 23 countries, gathered in an informal network since 2012. After a continuous growth over the last few years, YCN is now in a process of formalisation.

YCN's objectives

- to share knowledge, best practice and information by managing a database of film & media educators and festivals, hosting an annual conference, identifying funding

trends and opportunities, enabling partnerships and collaborations and publishing news and research online.

- to advocate for Youth Cinema internationally by stimulating intercultural dialogue, interpreting EU legislations and presenting local best practice globally and vice versa.
- to support distribution of films made by young people by sharing films from member festivals and organisations.
- to promote and develop film & media education and culture by sharing and exploring new and creative learning approaches and organising events and workshops.
- to celebrate excellence among emerging filmmakers by hosting the annual Youth Cinema Network Award.

Meet our members by country:

- Austria: Media Literacy Award
- Belgium: JEF, JEF festival
- Brazil: Anim!Arte
- Bulgaria: Youth House Pazardzhik
- Canada: Reel Youth Film Festival
- Croatia: Croatian Film Association, KA00OSS, Vanima, Dubrovnik



- Film Festival, Four River Film Festival, Star Film Festival, VAFI/RAFI Int. Children & Youth Animation Film Festival
- Denmark: 48h of Hygge, The Next Film Festival, Station Next
- Germany: FiSH – Festival im StadtHafen, Up and Coming Film Festival, Werkstatt der Jungen Filmszene, Scope Institute Cologne
- Greece: Camera Zizanio
- Hungary: Kids' Eye Art Association
- India: Smile Int. Film Festival for Children & Youth
- Ireland: Fresh Film Festival
- Italy: Timeline Film Festival, Ottoman Association
- Norway: Amandus – Lillehammer Int. Student Film Festival, Nordic Youth Film Festival
- Russia: Studio DA
- Serbia: KREF, Media Education Centre
- Slovenia: Emimation, Ambitia Institute
- Spain: Ecozine Film Festival, Huesca Int. Film Festival, Int. Youth Film Festival Plasencia
- Sweden: Novemberfestivalen
- Switzerland: Schweizer Jugendfilmtage
- UK: BFI Future Film Festival, Fans Youth Film Festival, Leeds Young Film Festival, Wicked Wales, Creative Scotland
- USA: National Festival of Talented Youth, Northwest High School Film Festival
- USA/Sweden: Int. Youth Media Summit

To find out more, contact: marija.ratkovicvidakovic.1@vbu.se

Judy Naidoo about KINGS OF MULBERRY STREET

“We only had one car to blow up”



Welcome to Mulberry Street in Durban, South-Africa. When Babu and his father are moving in, meeting Ticky – the boy next door – is unavoidable. Ticky is wild and cheeky, his role models are all Bollywood movie heroes, while Babu is introverted and well-educated. An odd duo, sharing a passion for crazy adventures. But the biggest adventure is yet to come, when the boys take on the fight against nasty neighbourhood gangster Raja. **KINGS OF MULBERRY STREET**, directed by

Judy Naidoo, serves a cocktail of vibrant South-African street life, combined with the grand spectacle of Bollywood cinema. The result is an entertaining, upbeat movie adventure. During the classic Bollywood dance finale, the audience in the Schlingel Festival had a hard time remaining seated, affected by pure and uncut Bollywood dancing vibes.

Even if it's a highly entertaining film, underneath the surface many social issues are tackled.

Judy Naidoo: The film is inspired by my childhood in South Africa, living in the eighties during the last days of apartheid. The story is set in 1989, just before democracy came. I wanted to be true to that time and that reality, when our world was still segregated. For me it was important that there was some heart to the film, which came with my childhood memories. I was a naughty kid, a tomboy doing lots of mischief. Just like Ticky, I jumped on a roof and fell off. I wanted to be like those action movie heroes, practicing Kung-Fu and karate.

The movie is also inspired by the films you watched as a child.

Naidoo: I've watched Bollywood all through my childhood. Bollywood films have romance, dancing, and there is always a villain, a bad guy. The overly romantic parts never appealed to me, but I was amused by strong female characters, police officers or vigilantes who were going in, kicking the shit out of the bad guys. I also grew up watching westerns. When casting these two boys, I could see them like a young Bud Spencer and Terrence Hill. Those were my earliest memories of cinema. But at the very heart of it, I wanted to tell a simple story about friendship and how dear it is at that age to have a friend that believes in you.

In a society segregated by colour but also by class, I wonder if kids like Ticky and Baboo could have ever even met with each other.

Naidoo: In the eighties you could move from Durban to Johannesburg because your life was improving. But Baboo's family has seen some hard

times and they have to make the move backwards. In real life Baboo, a private school pupil from a well-off family, and Ticky attending public school would never meet and become friends.

The 'king of petty crimes' ruling the neighbourhood, was that also part of the typical 1989 scenery?

Naidoo: Neville Pillay, playing Raja, was born and raised in Phoenix, an area notorious for drugs and gangsters. Bad things happen there. When putting the villain's story together, everything was drawn from real situations. In the eighties, if you walked into an Indian town as a white guy, you would stick out like a sore thumb. That integration had not happened yet. That is why there is only one white character in my film.

Also the position of women is a topic that pops up when digging deeper into the story.

Naidoo: In South Africa even nowadays in a lot of families fathers are not present. It's a thing that stems from





Judy Naidoo (middle) with the Schlingel team

our history. Especially in poor households, with fathers escaping through drugs, alcohol etc., mothers are often left to be the ones running the household, disciplining the children, doing almost everything. As a boy among many sisters, Ticky is surrounded by strong women, who reflect our society. There are many granny's like the one in the film, putting their lives on the line for their family – most of them are quite feisty. They will never stop asking questions or imposing responsibilities.

You prove yourself an excellent observer of life out on the streets.

Naidoo: The film was shot close to where I grew up in Durban, and all of

the characters were inspired by people that I knew. I was born in a middle class family, surrounded by lower income housing areas. I've always been in the position of an outsider, looking into those communities.

You take a certain risk in the way you picture Baboo, on the edge of being ridiculed. Chubby as he is, you expose him performing a silly dance. How did you keep him with his dignity?

Naidoo: Every Bollywood fan will recognise this dance, originally performed by the great Sridevi, from whom Baboo copies parts of the choreography. The fact that he goes on stage, doing that dance, reveals an

important aspect of his personality: being committed! As a character he is very consistent. Whatever situation he is confronted with, he will always respond in a Baboo-kind-of-way. He is an intelligent kid, just like Ticky. Coming from a poor background doesn't mean you're stupid. Don't underestimate people because of where they come from or how they look. Ticky and Baboo are like two sides of the same coin, and I am that coin. I was chubby like Baboo, but crazy like Ticky.

You cast them as a duo?

Naidoo: Baboo we found easily. The only thing worrying me was that he was only 8 years old. But what maturity and confidence he had for his

age. But Ticky, we couldn't find. Only children from private schools would react to our calls, while this kid needed to be kind of cool and rough and unpolished. Finally we found him in my hometown. The boy in the audition looked nothing like the kid in the movie. He was incredibly shy, his body language was very much inwards, he had a bowl haircut, but he was good at remembering lines. At some point I thought: if this child would grow his hair out, he would look like a perfect Mowgli. During the 6 weeks of preparation, he blossomed and came out of his shell. His only problem was: he couldn't master the slang language. All the time I asked his parents to practice street talk with him, but be-



cause he is such a well behaved kid, he couldn't handle the more rude lines. He had the greatest problem only saying the word 'shit'.

His hair looks fantastic!

Naidoo: Not when I first met him! After the shooting he came up to me and said: "*Juicy* (that's how they called me), *do you know that most of the time I couldn't see a thing?*"

I find that hard to believe. From his very first second on screen, he radiates with star quality, blowing everybody away with his confidence.

Naidoo: He was totally not cast close to his character. The experience helped him to grow. Actually the two boys were the opposite. Baboo is crazy and a bit hyperactive, Ticky is very polite and considerate. Yet they became like brothers on set.

What were the most difficult moments on the set?

Naidoo: When we were recording stunts. When Ticky saw his stunt double at work, he was like: "*That looks easy, I can do it myself.*" But then they needed time to overcome their anxiety, doing scenes over and over again, until we finally got what we wanted.

The movie clips in KINGS OF MUL-

BERRY STREET are all original Bollywood material?

Naidoo: Every single clip used in the film is iconic, these are legendary pieces of Bollywood cinema. The very opening scene is with Rajinikanth, who is worshipped like a god of South Indian cinema. Ticky introduces Baboo to cinema through a film called RAM LAKHAN, with Anil Kapoor. Then Baboo dances to 'Hawa Hawai'. Every Indian under the sun knows that song. I made the film for \$500,000 and a large sum went into these Bollywood music pieces. I was most lucky with Amitabh Bachchan's scene, one of the most classic dying sequences in any film. I tried to have those Bollywood clips well integrated into the story. Ticky is such a melodramatic boy that he even wants to die like a movie star on the screen. 99% of any western audience will not get those Bollywood references, but I wanted it to be entertaining either way.

Where does that closing scene come from, with all its vibrant dancing?

Naidoo: I asked my composer Brendan Jury for a song with a Latin vibe to it. Bollywood borrows from all types of music around the world. In this song, I wanted each of

my characters to have their own moment. Recording that scene was such fun. We filmed it at night, out on that one street where most of the film was shot, and the whole community came out, standing around cheering and enjoying the music. All the kids were up late and nobody complained. It was a marvellous night!

Apparently there was another very special day on the set...

Naidoo: When we filmed the explosion! I always wanted to do that! We only had one chance to blow up a car, because we only had one. I told the pyrotechnician: "*This is my first explosion in my first film with kids, so the main thing I want for everybody is to be safe. However I want a full screen explosion! Please tell me that this red box you're carrying is enough to do the damage!*" And guess what... we got a full screen explosion. I don't think anyone has ever seen me smiling so deliriously happy before. I would love to do another action movie, only for the sake of blowing things up.

How do you evaluate the audience's reactions so far?

Naidoo: In South Africa, at my request, we had a premiere for underprivileged children. For these kids, the language is still an issue, many of

them don't speak English. But their response was so good. Screening it here for an international audience, again I was so nervous, I couldn't bare to sit and watch it together with them but I felt happy and relieved. Working for a young audience for the first time, I'm still trying to get my head around what can be done and what can't. I'm trying to figure out why, for instance, some people have a problem with guns being fired or cars exploding in my film. However, I'm very glad that the film is now travelling to so many wonderful festivals.

–
Gert Hermans

World Sales: Attraction Distribution,
info@attractiondistribution.ca

THE SET COLOURS GREEN

Zlin Film Festival invites Eco Consultancy

Films can show nature in all its beauty. They tell inspiring stories about people living in harmony with the planet. They can sharpen our eco awareness. Yet films are the end product of an industry with a huge ecological footprint. The Zlin Children & Youth Film Festival and the Slovak Audiovisual Fund invited French company Secoya Eco-Tournage for a presentation in the framework of the Green Screen programme. Chloé Guilhem guided a group of film professionals through a series of initiatives with 'eco-production' as a keyword. Without extra costs for the film producer!

Green Screen is a five-year program, supported by the European Union and the European Regional Development Fund, that aims to minimise the film industry's environmental impact. With eight participating countries - Slovakia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Spain and Belgium - each country comes with its own methods. In Slovakia and the Czech Republic a 'green manual' has been published, in France filmmakers can apply for an 'eco-bonus',

the Flemish Film Fund recruited a permanent 'eco expert' and in the UK a certificate system was launched.

Secoya is the brainchild of two former location managers Charles Gachet-Dieuzeide and Mathieu Delahousse, who had experienced the massive ecological footprint of a film set once too much. They first met on the set of a children's film BELLE AND SEBASTIAN.

The ecological impact of the movie business is immense. Of all Californian industries, Hollywood has the second biggest ecological footprint, right after the oil industry. We're talking transportation, CO2 emissions, enormous amounts of plastic bottles and surplus food, and general pollution (like fake snow coming in small toxic bulbs). Secoya is careful when formulating its priorities. *"We know that the complex film logistics often will put ecology in second place,"* says Chloé Guilhem. *"Artistic freedom always comes first, but then environmental impact shouldn't be neglected. That's why Secoya comes with strategy, staff,*

stuff and stats." And solutions! Like using flasks instead of plastic bottles, providing caterers with local, organic products and defining strategies to save money on the use of batteries, coffee and printing paper. *"When confronted with producers presuming that 'all this will be too expensive', we explain how with a conscious policy regarding transportation, catering and energy, a lot of money can be economised."*

One important advice would be to 'start early'. Which could mean:

- Raising awareness among film students by implementing sustainability in their curricula. *"We believe that the young generation has the potential to change this situation, and they will!"*
- Implementing sustainability already in the scriptwriting process. Tim Wagendorp, eco coordinator at the Flemish Film Fund: *"Recent Belgian productions like BINTI and GIRL came with an outspoken 'green script' and a minimal impact on transportation."*



Maciej Jakubczyk at the Forum

In the future, Green Screen does not want to place all responsibility on the filmmakers. Cinema's and festivals also have a long way to go in reducing their ecological impact.

—
Gert Hermans

More info: www.interregeurope.eu/greenscreen

Contact Secoya Eco-Tournage:
<https://secoya-ecotournage.com>

This is LUCAS: Get involved!

LUCAS, Germany's longest standing film festival for young audiences, has – not for the first time – taken film education one step further.

“A student throws her sandwich through the cafeteria and hits her ex-boyfriend. Cut. The girl, covered in stains, sits in front of the principal's office. Cut. The short film SCREW THE BOYS is about a middle school student [...] who does her own thing”. This is how 15 year old Cora described the winning short film of Section 13+ in a film critic workshop at the 42nd edition of LUCAS – Int. Festival for Young Film Lovers (19th–26th September 2019).

The intensive, critical and often creative examination of festival films is an integral part of the LUCAS Festival, which has been organised by DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in Frankfurt am Main since 1975. Since 1985, children and young people have been equal members of the award juries. But only since its restructuring in 2016 has the festival made participation - labelled “Get Involved!” - its

trademark, thus reinventing itself.

“At LUCAS, watching films is just the beginning. It is particularly important for us to enable as many children and young people as possible to participate in film culture, and as pioneers in this field we know: “Getting involved!” is the best way to go,” explains festival director Julia Fleißig. “Get Involved!” means making the festival your own as members of the jury, young critics, reporters or presenters. A growing number of outreach programs offer school classes the opportunity to engage with competition films by re-enacting key scenes, designing posters and much more.

In 2019, the festival went yet one step further in its mission and let young curators take over four film programs, starting with the “Minis” section for the four years and up age group. The international participants of the annual Young European Cinephiles exchange program and – for the first time in 2019 – the students of the Classics Class also put together their own section. Seven to nine year old



junior curators showed their favorite experimental films, ranging from the classic KIRIKI - LES ACROBATS JAPONAIS (1907) by Segundo de Chomón to contemporary LUMO (2009) by Antje Heyn. “LUCAS has always put a great deal of trust in the curiosity of young people” says Fleißig.

The DFF's film literacy expertise plays an important role for the festival's call to “Get Involved!”. The Frankfurt based institution constantly develops innovative new formats in order to keep film culture alive for a younger generation. Projects such as the intercultural film club Blickwechsel Jetzt were guests at LUCAS. One school class examined the historical develop-

ment of special effects in workshops with film educators Carsten Siehl and Wilke Bitter. The students themselves presented a film selection to their peers. Julia Fleißig: “The programmes devised by the young generation and the discussions among peers contribute heavily to creating and strengthening communities of film lovers of all ages”.

–
Jenni Ellwanger

More at:

www.lucas-filmfestival.de;
Instagram: @lucasfestival

Jan-Willem Bult about 30 years of UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child

Celebrating the 30 year anniversary of UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child offers a perfect alibi to interview Jan-Willem Bult, who has played an active role in the worldwide implementation of all arts and media related points in the Convention.

Jan-Willem Bult has been active in every possible segment of media for young people, starting in the nineties as programmer and creative producer of children & youth content on public radio and TV in The Netherlands. His approach was from the beginning international, especially as President of the EBU Eurovision Children & Youth Experts (which he was until 2014). After leaving public TV he found new ways to create, direct and invest in young people's media.

In all those international commitments, you have often partnered up with UNICEF. Did UNICEF choose you for this role or did you choose UNICEF?

Jan-Willem Bult: In the late nineties I had a job in children's TV as Pro-

gramme Director for the first Dutch private children's channel KinderNet. My programming was 'children's rights' driven and I broadcasted some of UNICEF's animated clips. Later, when becoming Creative Head of KRO Public Broadcasting, I remained in touch with UNICEF. When I created a preschool documentary format that was launched worldwide, UNICEF New York was interested in co-producing but I didn't agree with the suggested adjustments that were more adult oriented, and didn't put children in the centre. After I left public TV in 2014, I've been contracted by UNICEF in e.g. Tajikistan, Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan to develop local programmes and channels.

How does your work carry out the values of the Convention?

Bult: By creating strong stories and formats, rooted in the reality of children's lives. With my work as a creator, producer and lecturer I'm reaching out to more than 65 countries. In most of them, children's rights are not secured. Working in many devel-



oping and transition countries, I experienced the limited perspectives that children have.

Your work is based on the so-called 'Children in the Centre' philosophy.

Bult: Which stands for: a strong belief in the autonomy of children (as protagonists and as an audience), that should be reflected in the content. Forget about what parents or politicians would think, and dedicate your work completely to what it could mean for children and youth. Long before the days of YouTube and social media, I created for Dutch broadcasters NPO/KRO an online platform for children and youth where they could

post their self-made videos.

You even teach this philosophy on an academic level.

Bult: Last October we launched the first Children in the Centre Postgraduate Seminar at the Universidad Buenos Aires. One month of classes with students from sections such as Audio-visual work, Architecture and Design. This is a major step forward into building an academic basis for quality in children's media.

Working around the globe, you're combining efforts on a practical and policy level.

Bult: Because of my status as interna-



tional expert, in all modesty, I often have access to local decision makers, such as Ministers of Education or Culture and I can give a last push to plans that somehow got stuck in the final stage. This is how, for instance, we could start producing a preschool TV programme for national Cuban TV. Through my work I'm constantly advocating for the importance of quality children's media, such as independent tailor-made news programmes for children, like we now launched in Argentina. Only exceptionally I still do hands-on work with children, to stay connected with my target group and learn from them. Like the project I did at the Turkish-Syrian border with children from both countries, creating friendships between refugees and local kids. But most of my time I dedicate to practical training of media professionals and setting up international exchanges.

These days you mainly work in South America. Is this because your work was most needed there?

Bult: When traveling to Chile for a festival, I got connected to producers and institutions from all over the continent. They immediately identified with the 'Children in the Centre' philosophy and I encouraged them to create their own formats with local



News for kids in Ukraine

producers. And for a few years it is for personal reasons that Buenos Aires became my second home.

Were there moments over the last 30 years when you felt that the big events in world politics had a direct impact on your work?

Bult: At the moment when I launched in Latin America my call to create programmes on a local scale, Hugo Chavez made his plea for a Latin America identity. That was a mutual positive reinforcement. And since 2014 I'm developing tailor-made news programmes for children for the Dutch NGO Free Press Unlimited. In times of fake news, there is an increasing awareness about the importance of media literacy. Nowadays 10

Latin American countries are participating in the 'WADADA News for Kids' global network.

ECFA has a lot of members who are active in media education, especially in Europe. What do you have to offer them? On what occasion can they call in your help?

Bult: For Free Press Unlimited I developed the digital news literacy project 'Keeping it Real'. In Montenegro I have set up and supported media productions within a nationwide campaign to create a better media landscape for children and youth. My experiences and networks I can share with others, and as a freelancer I'm prepared to further direct projects and processes.

Is there a project that you have worked on over the years that you are particularly proud of?

Bult: Probably most significant was the creation of the preschool.doc@ format in the early 2000s. This has laid the foundation for all Children in the Centre formats and many others. They have been produced and broadcasted in over 40 countries and the ratings among preschoolers are still high. Above all, it shows how stories from preschool children can entertain and inspire new generations.

I remember your special interest in film music, even as a DJ at parties. What secret tip can you share with us as the ultimate floor filler in your DJ set?

Bult: In film festivals, those DJ sets are usually not meant to fill the floor but to open the evening. A track that is always well-appreciated is 'The Wings' from BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (by Gustavo Santaolalla), with a great Tony Moran Rigg remix to dance to. Another one that might make you dance is 'Believe' from LOLA RENNT, with the voice of actress Franka Potente.

–
Gert Hermans

Willem Bosch & Sanaa Giwa about AFTERLIFE

Do not pull that string

How many milkshakes did I drink during my life? How many people have ever been in love with me? Those are the kind of questions that 16-year-old (and just deceased) Sam asks the angel who welcomes her at heaven's gate. But her most important question remains unanswered...

Sam cannot decide: should she go to heaven and be reunited with her mother, or should she choose reincarnation? Sounds complicated... Dutch director Willem Bosch tells the story with great ease and a sense of surrealism.

Nothing is as complex as the time-space continuum! Save me the trouble of checking the metaphysical details of your story and just tell me: is it all somehow scientifically correct?

Willem Bosch: Yes. You can hammer a little hole into that story, but not a whole crater. You can get the concept to falter, but not to collapse. I have

an answer to all your objections, even if it might sound like total nonsense. In the excellent film *LOOPER*, Jeff Daniëls and Joseph Gordon-Levitt talk about the concept of time travel and Daniëls comes up with the perfect answer: "All that time travel shit fries your brain." Of course the story only works if you accept the possible inconsistencies. In my film, there are little strings sticking out here and there, and when you would pull them, the whole story starts to unravel.

Are you interested in the concept of reincarnation?

Bosch: I grew up in a Catholic tradition where the existence of a here-after was much more concrete than reincarnation. But as a child I often fantasized about what I had been doing in my former lives. My mother had, as in the film, a soft spot for dramatic scenes, was totally convinced. She interviewed me and those recordings have been preserved. You can hear how I invented everything right on



Director Willem Bosch (left, with family) and Sanaa Giwa (right)

the spot: that I had been a sultan etc. My mother took it all very seriously. Sanaa Giwa: I doubt between two extreme ideas: either there is a huge hereafter where all the dead go, or there is nothing at all.

Your father has been a pastor.

Bosch: My father resigned from his duties when he met my mother in 1974. In those days there was a left wing catholic movement that was not very strict. In *AFTERLIFE* he recognised plenty of themes that were in line with his humanistic approach towards religion.

Do you need to believe in heaven to direct a film like *AFTERLIFE*?

Bosch: Ever since my mother died, I've been brooding about that. Maybe there isn't anything at all. That seems like a fairly manageable, nice situation. Or maybe there is some kind of afterlife, with all its unpleasant implications. When every day is the same, there is no evolution anymore, there is only a complete standstill. Imagine yourself sitting there all the time, surrounded by dead people... after a week you'd be bored to death. What else can heaven be but half a hell on earth?

Your design of heaven is very straightforward and urban.

Bosch: When I wrote the script, I was at a turning point in my life. With our



first child being born, my entire life revolved around taking care of children and being responsible. While in heaven you can smoke and drink every day, and be free. But for sure a huge bureaucracy must be involved. Everything in heaven will be handled by men putting stamps on documents. Typically Dutch: please bring the right forms, otherwise you will not get in. Giwa: Even the angels are officials!

Like Martin, the angel who takes care of Sam.

Bosch: Civil servants can by definition seek cover behind the back of their boss. *"I didn't make those rules. I only do what I was told."* But the Lord Almighty stays out of the picture completely. He is not there to justify himself, and those officials have to solve their own problems. All angels are some kind of second-rate magicians: they know how to perform some tricks, and that is all they know.

According to the film, babies are the ones who know everything.

Bosch: You wonder what's going on inside their little heads. Sometimes it gets really mysterious when they stare over your shoulder at the corner of a room and their face suddenly shivers with fear or pleasure. That's when you think: *"Those babies know*

more than we do!"

Sam's mother is a pretty extreme character. I find her a bit frightening.

Bosch: So is actress Romana Vrede in real life. She understood exactly what I was looking for: something theatrical, that I recognised in my mother.

Sanaa is the exact opposite, acting rather restrained, neutral, as if we can fill in the emotions on her face ourselves.

Bosch: With Sam, much more is going on on the inside than what can be seen on her face. "Not everyone needs to know how I feel." There was a bit of typecasting involved. You can expect an experienced actress to handle a wide range of emotions. But I think a rookie like Giwa, you should cast only for a role that stands close to her own personality.

Giwa: Sam's character is standing close to me as a person. When I read the scenario, I often thought: this is exactly how I would respond. Sometimes on set I was showered in compliments: "Wow, your acting was fantastic in that scene!" While I knew: that was no acting, that was just me being me.

That you already noticed during the



casting?

Bosch: Five remaining candidates had to play a scene together with Romana. She was all over the place – giving it all – and those young actresses had to respond. Out of those five girls, two were completely paralyzed, two others went along on Romana's crazy trip... and only one kept her cool. Sanaa was cool as ice!

You didn't find acting difficult at all?

Giwa: Only the practical details. In one scene 260 milkshakes were standing on the floor, all of them disappearing one moment later. That was such a hassle, with people almost performing magic to make that whole load of milkshakes disappear unnoticed, in a blink of an eye. Terribly complicated!

And guess what? No one in the audience even notices the result.

I found an interesting quote from you: "Good children's films are about things that parents discuss while the children, at the top of the stairs, secretly listen in."

Bosch: That is what defines Dutch youth films for me. That's a way to bring issues to young people's attention and to push boundaries.

–
Gert Hermans

World sales: Dutch features,
sales@dutchfeatures.com;
www.dutchfeatures.com

A CINEKID HONORARY AWARD FOR TWIN FILM

A tribute to Bea Appels and Dick De Jonge

It was a beautiful moment when Dick De Jonge and Bea Appels, who sailed together for 40 years under the flag of Twin Film, received a Cinekid Lifetime Achievement Award for their merit for Dutch children's film culture. Cinekid programmer Erik Tijman: *"They've always known what they like and what they don't like, and above all, they love what they do and do it with passion."* The trophy was handed over by Felix Vanginderhuysen, *compagnon de route* throughout all those years.

Once they were exhibitors of children's films, who got inspired by, among other things, the German children's film scene. That experience they took with them to the Netherlands where they gathered a group of volunteers and set up a children's film club in Amsterdam - initially in a former prison - and were among the first working with education and animation for young film fans. In the 70s they programmed children's films for various cinemas, but later the focus was more and more on their own distribution. In 1982 their twins were

born and one year later the company got its name: Twin Film. I want to hear from Dick De Jonge and Bea Appels how they have experienced the latest decade of children's film. Do they still recognise anything of the spirit of the pioneers?

Bea Appels: Initially, we programmed children's films in a chain of film houses. We often went to Germany and there we saw titles that seemed very suitable for the Dutch market, but nobody bought them. So we started buying them ourselves: art house films with a strong impact. Since 1979 we have released around 250 titles for children.

How did you experience the last ten years of your career?

Dick De Jonge: There has been an economies of scale. Due to digitization, screening films became easier and distributing children's films became more appealing. More and more distributors focused, sometimes exclusively, on that genre. The competition grew stronger and you had to share your slots with others. Thus it



Bea Appels and Dick De Jonge with Felix Vanginderhuysen (left)

takes more time for a film to earn its money back.

Has the industry become more competitive?

De Jonge: We used to have all the big cities in our pocket. Now it has all become much more scattered. Due to digitization, mainstream titles are now affordable for all exhibitors. This caused a shift in the programming. We only wanted to release titles that really meant something for children. Nowadays, the most important mission for many companies is simply surviving.

Has production also changed?

Appels: We used to return from Berlin every year with at least four 24-carat titles in our suitcase. That is no longer the case. A lot is being produced, but only a little of it is suitable for us. The number of visitors in the cinema has also changed drastically. KIRIKOU AND THE SORCERESS attracted more than 100,000 visitors in the Netherlands, for SOPHIE'S WORLD, a subtitled film with a challenging concept, more than 20,000 people came to the theatres. Now less time is granted to make such admissions. It is still a lovely business, but we have done it long



enough.

That is when the search for a successor started.

Appels: Under the Twin Video label, our catalogue has found shelter with In The Air (ITA). This puts us in a luxury position: I can still do business with titles that we really want, but it is no longer a necessity.

Because it's all followed up now by ITA's Jos Bonouvrie?

Appels: It's a great feeling to know your catalogue is in the right hands. ITA, which was initially a branch of Bos Bros, contacted us for the first time for THE GREAT BEAR. They wanted to work with that film after the release, and they did an excellent job. We could focus on the cinema release

and they handled the follow-up. Nowadays, the entire process is in their hands. The workload was getting too high for two people. We would spend the whole Sunday preparing the upcoming week. Now time has come to focus on other things every now and then.

Besides the catalogue, did ITA also partially adopt the vision of Twin Film?

Appels: Certainly. They strive for quality, with titles such as CLOUDBOY, NEXT DOOR SPY, BINTI etc. And they can achieve things that we could not deal with, such as selling to online platforms, VOD, pay TV, commercial broadcasters etc.

De Jonge: We still advise on certain titles. I find it a blessing that we can

share our experience with someone who builds upon it.

Instead of looking ahead, you can start looking back upon things. Are you ready to do that?

Appels: Not at all. I am very much living in the now. You have to really try to make something of every moment. We can do things that we never could do before: spending time with your family, your children and grandchildren.

From those 45 years, can you choose something that really stood out?

Appels: KIRIKOU AND THE SORCERESS. Or SONG OF THE SEA. We followed the entire production process and then you finally see what a beautiful film it has become. I really enjoyed bringing PIPPI LONGSTOCKING to the Netherlands. The first WILLY WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY got a minimal release by Warner Bros in the Netherlands, while we could work for years with that film. After months of negotiating by telephone, telex or fax, the consent finally came from the US. The animated story of THE BFG by Brian Cosgrove was made for TV, Belgium and the Netherlands were the only countries where that movie made it to the big screen.

What is for you the essence of the sector that you've been working in for so long?

De Jonge: We still meet people looking for films that can really make a difference for children. And we want to support people still making those films, as the government has never offered them substantial financial support.

Appels: For many years we've participated in the Nordic Film Days in Lübeck. There, we met plenty of people with a heart for children's film and there were all the time discussions that added to our formation.

Many of those people sooner or later met in ECFA. You were standing at the forefront.

Appels: I liked the objectives of ECFA, but it didn't always work for me. Only in the last 5 years we see people who really support and inform each other. The platform has grown well, but financially it is shaky. We should have had a subsidised office already years ago. The most important thing for us was always searching for new films. ECFA was important for that. But I don't have high regards of ECFA Jury's and Awards.

—
Gert Hermans



WILLY WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Imogen Thomas about EMU RUNNER

“Emus have a curious nature, which worked to our advantage”

Nine-year-old Gem Daniels lives in a remote Australian town. As she copes with her mother’s death, Gem finds solace in the company of a wild emu. This heart-warming story plays out against the challenges that come from living in a small and isolated community. *“It was a privilege to share these people’s lives. I think that is a gift for all of us”* says director Imogen Thomas.

This year’s Zlin Film Festival ‘Discover and Explore’ section paid particular attention to films about cultural minorities, with EMU RUNNER as a perfect example. A film made with the local community in an isolated Australian outback town named Brewarrina.

Imogen Thomas: Brewarrina is a solid 10-hour drive from Sydney. A bus goes there only a few times a week. From my very first visit in 2003 I felt a strong sense of ‘community’ about the people that lived there. It is a place of incredible natural beauty and a place of significant First Nation

Culture. It is also a place where there is great poverty and social disadvantage. EMU RUNNER was made with and for the Brewarrina community. The process of making the film has been equally important as the end result. It was a platform to bring people together, to tell a story that reflected their lives near the banks of the Barwon River, and the rich culture of First Nations People.

Is this community a geographical thing or does it go beyond geography?

Thomas: It is the traditional land where tribes came together to partake in ceremonies as well as to enjoy the abundance that the river had to offer. Sadly, due to a savage drought and poor government management, the river is in very bad shape. This has a huge impact, as without water these people’s very existence is at risk.

You found advisors to help you with the script?

Thomas: The script was developed in close consultation with members of



the Brewarrina Indigenous community, in particular Frayne Barker, the Director of the Indigenous Preschool. It was through her encouragement that I set upon telling the story from a child’s perspective. We both felt it would be the most compelling entry point to examine the impact of loss and grief. We wanted a story that showed the depth of a child’s sorrow as well incorporated the rich cultural connections to a country, as that is where solace and healing happens.

The film surprises the audience with introspective moments, often close-ups of objects of nature: a flower, a

tree, a feather, a cloud...

Thomas: The whole story rests on the natural world. It was important to not only explore the hardships faced by Gem but to also celebrate the beauty of her world. In many ways the country, with all its elements, is a character too. It has a voice, such as the bird song, the cricket’s pulsating hum and the babbling sounds of the river. The lessons Gem takes from nature help her to carry on after her mother’s death. I hope that instilling a love for nature might be a way to engage audiences to be more open to the wisdom of our First Nations people who have been far more successful as protec-



tors of the natural world.

The landscape is often so dry that it hurts the eye.

Thomas: I began principal photography of EMU RUNNER in August and September of 2017, the Australian winter. Brewarrina was in drought at that time and it still is today. In the middle of the day the temperatures reached 48 degrees - it was crippling heat. This meant we could only work with the young cast in the early hours of the morning, for a limited time. Even with such harsh climatic conditions I was amazed at how the natural world revealed its strength and resilience.

What is the reason behind Gem's fascination for emus?

Thomas: The emu is Gem's totem animal. An indigenous person's totem animal is passed down from their mother. It also means they have a responsibility to watch over the animal. The first time I saw an emu I was completely mesmerised. Flightless these birds may be, but ultimately, they are a symbol of speed and grace. They are always moving forward, as Gem must. It is the male emu that is responsible for raising the young, just as Gem's father finds himself responsible for his children.

How did you work with the emus on set?

Thomas: We shot at an emu farm. Emus are very unpredictable, but they do have a curious nature, which worked to our advantage. We did not work with just one emu, rather we worked in a fenced paddock where there were hundreds of birds. Trying to keep just one bird in our frame was always a challenge.

How realistic is the picture of failing governmental institutions that you paint?

Thomas: EMU RUNNER is a fiction film. I have made dramatic choices that I hope will inspire discussions about how governmental institutions can work better with Indigenous communities. I am fully aware that Australia has a long way to go, but I believe it was important that EMU RUNNER delivered audiences at the end of the film to a place that offers hope and the potential for change.

There is a lot of running to be done for Gem. Was it physically challenging for young actress Rhæe-Kye Waites?

Thomas: Rhæe-Kye is naturally athletic. Even so, filmmaking requires doing several takes of a particular action, and in some instances, we were limit-



ed, as Rhæe-Kye would get very tired. This was the case for the final race so this meant the crew had to be on top of their game. EMU RUNNER was made with a micro-budget and a small crew. It demanded of all the crew a greater level of inventiveness due to the limited resources we had at our disposal. We were very fortunate that Rhæe-Kye had an incredibly supportive family.

Over the years cinema has been utterly important to carry out the stories of Indigenous people in Australia.

Thomas: I would like to believe cinema has the ability to affect real social change. What cinema can do extremely well is be the launching

pad for a conversation about ideas. Hopefully that conversation will lead to something positive and constructive. Watching EMU RUNNER, I hope audiences come to understand the adversities which arise from living in a remote community as well as marvel in the richness of our First Nation's Culture. What we hope to deliver for the community, ultimately, is bringing the story back to them, so that they can see themselves reflected up on the screen.

–
Gert Hermans



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ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economic, 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 (€ 250 per year):

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