

BURNY BOS (the Netherlands)



Personal impression by Xiaojuan Zhou

If Rock Demers is the godfather of Canadian children's films, in my view, Burny Bos is the equivalent on the other side of the Atlantic. I wish I could have met Burny when he was at the age of Tom Sawyer - he must have been a naughty boy full of daring ideas that could mesmerise little girls! Burny and I grew up on different planets and who could foresee that we would even meet, collaborate and be-friend for 20 plus years!! Burny was born in a place with wind-mills, cheese and lots of fairy tales. Me in communist China, a pigtailed young pioneer who was told to change the world!

If no one else, three women writers played an important role in his life: Astrid Lindgren (PIPPi LONGSTOCKING) whose work inspired him to pursue a career for children; Annie M.G.

Schmidt whose body of novels was successfully adapted for the big screen by Burny's team; and Tamara Bos, his daughter, accomplished scriptwriter and his right hand at BosBros.

It was one of Burny's early films, *THE PENKNIFE*, that introduced me to his world. Burny was a father figure, a published writer, an award winning producer, an entrepreneur and a die hard believer in dreams. Through the ups and downs he had in his personal wealth and health, one thing remained unchanged: his passion for good stories. At BosBros, *MINOES*, *WINKY'S HORSE*, *WIPLALA*, intelligent and commercially viable films were churned out one after another. Burny is a great storyteller, so good that he can blur the line between fiction and reality. His humour is contagious. Deep-

ly rooted in Dutch culture, his films were festival darlings and are among the best sold Dutch films ever at home and abroad. His countrymen gave him a Lifetime Achievement Award for his pioneering work in quality family entertainment. There is only one Burny in Holland and elsewhere, and he's always his own bos(s).



THE 'MEET THE MENTORS' Q&A

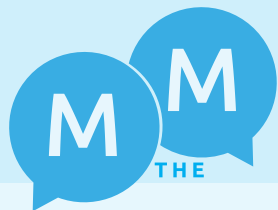
You have dedicated a big part of your life to quality children's cinema.

Burny Bos: It all started when a Dutch broadcaster needed someone to set up a children's department, back in the eighties when we had only two channels and 10 hours of TV per day. Up till then I had only made radio for kids and I jumped into that completely new and unknown world. As crazy as it was, it allowed me to do crazy things. As an outsider I could pick a team of people with fresh ideas. We immediately became hugely successful because we were 'different'. Our tone of voice was full of humour, never patronising. We took our audience seriously and told our stories in a way that inspired them and made them laugh. Success made me eager to do more. I was convinced that I could write and produce a feature film, without ever having written one before, and so I did. *MY FATHER LIVES IN RIO* was my first feature and a winner at the Berlinale. Soon I decided being an independent producer fitted me better than being an employee.

Who, fictional or real, inspired you the most?

Bos: The TV programmes I saw in Scandinavian countries. That was exactly the





tone on which I wished to address children. Back then in the Netherlands children were commonly addressed in a 'sugar sweet', rather infantile way, with high voices and childish vocabulary. TV programmes were gender divided - adventure, fighting, science for boys and family issues, rivalry, dolls, romance for girls - with plenty of moral preaching. In Scandinavia, as the heritage of Astrid Lindgren, programmes were made so much more from the child's point of view. I wanted children to make up their own minds, instead of presenting them the adult point of view.

What principles guided you in developing and producing children's films? How did you establish them?

Bos: When reading a script, my first questions are: Do I consider this film

necessary? Is there a certain urgency to make it? I look for 'freshness', a personal touch from the makers (writer/director). I tend to prefer protagonists who look at the world in a fresh or different way, yet still being a person I can relate to. In developing the script I have learned that I should continue to work on it until every doubt is resolved. Starting to produce, or even shoot, knowing that there still is a problem somewhere in the script, always hits you back like a boomerang. Another important principle: never change a winning team. I allow my directors to pick their own team. In my experience this pays off in a sense that the workflow and vibe during the production will be good.



Burny Bos & his daughter - writer Tamara Bos

What is the secret to your success? Personal character, study and travel, hard work, good luck or simply good genes?

Bos: I've asked myself this question many times... I think my success sprouted from a combination of mere luck, endurance, stubbornness and flair. This has not necessarily made me a popular person, especially not among decision makers regarding financial support. But in the end, the successes proved me right. Of course I deliberately choose not to mention the flops which are inevitable when you decide to make interesting films that are 'different'.

The children and youth who may go

through difficulties, bullying, family separation, sickness, war, poverty, covid-19 etc. What do you wish to tell them through the films you make?

Bos: My message to my audience is that every child should be seen and heard. I show them that my own ways of getting somewhere, by being stubborn, tenacious, showing flair, can help them find their way through the world. I am a strong believer in the power and stamina of youth. That is what I aim to trigger. Of course this message is not always as obvious, it depends upon the age group.

What makes a good film producer?

Bos: A good producer creates a 'family' of inspiring, creative professionals: writers, directors, line-producers, assistants, financial experts, etc. With their taste and attitude, this stable basis of people inspire each other. As a producer I'm not the 'controlling type'. I believe that allowing a person freedom and responsibility will pay off in the end, as it stimulates them to develop themselves. As to the choices to make, I believe in personal signature features with a strong story and interesting protagonists and antagonists. I tend not to choose for merely commercial stories, unless they combine all elements men-





MR. FROG

tioned. This way we created a library with a typical BosBros trademark.

Some say that what is national is also international. When producing a Dutch film, do you think about the international market?

Bos: We don't necessarily look at the international market as a criteria. We think about international coproduction options once we made the choice to produce a certain story. We do experience that a film with an outspoken local/national appeal can conquer international hearts by its basic human emotion.

Can you name a few things on your bucket list and how you plan to accomplish them?

Bos: Producing a Netflix series. I am

convinced that some of our stories deserve a bigger international audience. I am working on it! The other thing on my list is an animated family film. We hope that MISS MOXY, that we are currently financing, will become a worldwide success.

How do you wish to be remembered?

Bos: As a loving father who did the best he could to create a caring family, both in his personal and professional life.

Select Filmography:

MINOES
WINKY'S HORSE
WIPLALA
MR FROG
ZIGZAG KID

BOS BROS WINS PLATINUM GOAT IN ALE KINO! FESTIVAL

In the Ale Kino! Festival in Poznan, Poland, the 'Platinum Goat' Lifetime Achievement Award this year goes to BosBros.

At this year's Golden Calf Gala – the Dutch equivalent of the French Césars or Polish Eagles – one film took home four awards, including Best Screenplay and Best Director. In Poland, this raised a few eyebrows – such a distinction for a film for children! Well, in the Netherlands they might probably think ROMY'S SALON is not only a great movie, but even more importantly, a great movie for children...

High standards have been set since the very beginning, back in 1989. Three years later, THE PENKNIFE did not only win a Golden Calf Award, but was also awarded several European festival prizes, whereas the series based on the movie received the television Oscar, an Emmy Award. It also delighted us in Poznań, as a model for an extremely child-friendly type of 'cinema for the small ones', rich with multilevel values. In the years that followed, Ale Kino! festival participants had the chance to marvel at many more BosBros productions; THE BOY

WHO STOPPED TALKING, THE FLYING LIFTBOY, MISS MINOES, WINKY'S HORSE, PLUCK AND HIS TOW TRUCK, WHERE IS WINKY'S HORSE?, BEN X, MORISSON GETS A BABY SISTER, THE INDIAN, ALFIE THE LITTLE WERE-WOLF, FIDGETY BRAM, THE ZIG ZAG KID, THE AMAZING WIPLALA, MR. FROG – and last but not least, ROMY'S SALON, this year's laureate of four Golden Calves and last year's winner of the Golden Goats. One would say this film, directed by Mischa Kamp on a screenplay by Tamara Bos, is the capstone of a 30 year long career. But that is not the case, as we are sure that their future productions will bring more delight, excitement and joy to our young viewers.

For all these charming and clever films, made with passion and awareness of children's needs, with a professionalism that does not obscure the sincerity of film expression, we award the Platinum Goats 2020 to the BosBros production company, and we make particularly deep bows and send our warmest regards to the head of this crew, Burny Bos, and the extremely creative screenwriter, Tamara Bos.

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**Jerzy Moszkowicz, Festival Director
Poznań, 15.10.2020**