

MAKE SOME NOJSE

Connecting Nordic children's film festivals



NOJSE is a story of cooperation, a story of sharing and exchange, and therefore a story we love to spread. In NOJSE five Nordic festivals have found each other, and with extra funding from Creative Europe came new opportunities, and an extended structure for cooperation. We spoke with representatives of three out of the five participating festivals: Daniel Lundquist (BUFF, Sweden), Mika Anttolainen (Oulu Festival, Finland) and Mariella Harpelunde Jensen (Buster, Denmark), the latter currently coordinating most of the NOJSE activities. **What is NOJSE, how will it influence the Nordic festival landscape and how will results be visible on a European scale? But first of all...**

Cool name!

Daniel Lundquist: It stands for Nordic Junior Sessions.

All NOJSE partners are festivals?

Mika Anttolainen: We are five. We started with Buster in Copenhagen, BUFF in Malmo, and the Int'l Children's Film Festivals in Kristiansand

and Oulu. Last year the Reykjavík Int'l Film Festival joined.

But NOJSE didn't come out of the blue. Something was going on already...

Mariella Harpelunde Jensen: In 2018 we started co-curating a short film programme together, supported by local Nordic funding. We selected one film from each participating country and had the package travelling to each festival.

Lundquist: Through our collaboration with a pan-Nordic online educational platform, we made the films available for streaming in schools. We facilitated a translation into all Nordic languages, including minority languages like Sami and Faroese. This platform doesn't compete with regular distributors, we mainly provide shorts, slightly older films or documentaries, like the brand new THE FALL (by Andreas Koefoed, Denmark).

Curating films together requires a profound amount of openness.

Lundquist: Hopefully we can comple-



LASSE MAJA for domestic Swedish audiences

ment each other. For instance documentaries were never a priority at BUFF, but maybe our partners can help us to pave that path with good titles.

Jensen: Up to a certain degree there is a sense of competition among these festivals, but doing this curation and discussing films together is fun. That is why we wanted to take the next step...

You mean this 'collaboration between festivals'? It is what sounds

the most obvious and at the same time the most mysterious.

Jensen: We want to cooperate on many more levels: in feature films, in our industry programme - maybe we can make speakers travel, or further build upon each other's discussions about current trends or topics, for instance the fact that screening fees are rising, which might be the death of several wonderful, small festivals. With budgets that are decreasing, we have to be smart, join forces or maybe discuss fixed prices.



Lundquist: Now that we meet every month, we can bring practical issues to the table about prices, transportation, logistics...

You even have people working on NOJSE exclusively.

Jensen: Besides the local funding, the next two years money will come from the Creative Europe programme. Now we have Olivia Anna Christensen coordinating all administrative matters, and there is a print coordinator. Coordinated by Buster, we are trying to make the network more efficient in terms of administration and finances.

What else is new?

Olivia Anna Christensen: At the Berlinale we had a workshop in which a third party organisation helped us to set our priorities straight.

Anttolainen: We were listing our priorities and added a few ones for the future, trying to find out where we are on the map. All five festivals have many similarities, but we also have some individual issues. Together we've set out a framework for our co-operation.

What are the things that you all have in common?

Jensen: Our festivals are not oriented on education; we want children to



RICKY RAPPER for domestic Finnish audiences

experience film as an art form in the cinema, more than teaching them. Even if we do produce educational materials, for none of us this is the main focus.

Christensen: There is a general approach towards children's films shared by all Nordic countries. Those ideas are embedded in every aspect of schooling, education and upbringing of children in our society.

Are you referring to the liberal, open-minded approach towards film content?

Anttolainen: This is something we take for granted. We can screen all types of films that say and show whatever they want on screen. That goes without saying – this issue is not even on the table.

Jensen: In Oulu and Kristiansand the Christian communities might eventually cause small cracks in our united thinking, but both festivals are experts in dealing with that. We hear about festivals in other countries that sometimes have to sneak certain topics into their programme, but in Scandinavia everything can be openly

discussed.

And what are the differences between the partners?

Lundquist: Some of us mainly work with school audiences – BUFF has been developing this relation of trust with teachers ever since the festival started – while a festival like Buster excels in attracting family audiences in their free time. And we give a different importance to our ambitions in having the entire industry – national and international – involved with the festival.

Jensen: Networking helped me to understand the different financial situations for different festivals; conditions greatly differ from one country to another. I was surprised to find out about the limited budget that some festivals have to work on.

Which direction could NOJSE possibly lead you into in the near future?

Anttolainen: We are hoping for more studies and surveys on the situation in the Nordic countries.

Jensen: Our part of the industry should collect more data on the good work that we do. We constantly make reports and collect numbers... that then somehow vanish again. It is important to get our data out; those numbers will show to politicians how



much we contribute to children's culture. We can tell all the time how important we are, but data will prove it. Christensen: We are launching a think tank, in which we'll bring experts from the Nordic countries together to reflect on our work and mission and to delve into topics that we've encountered during our festivals. We are the ones observing the children while watching films together with their peers but it is up to the industry to process these topics and connect the data.

What possible topics could be discussed?

Jensen: Children don't read subtitles anymore. Nowadays teachers are asking for dubbing for 12 year old kids. Such tendencies will have an impact on our industry.

Lundquist: After this year's festival we have a discussion with Janne Vi-erth, children's film consultant at the Swedish Film Institute, and we will speak with children to find out what is missing – according to them – and what kind of content they'd like to see more. These results we will bring into the think tank.

So far the word 'production' was never mentioned. Do you consider stimulating Nordic production part-

ly a task for NOJSE?

Anttolainen: The idea was from the very beginning to give more attention to the production of films, so we could screen the results in our festivals. We are always in contact with the production companies, and good films are made in all partner countries, but often they don't even get distributed abroad.

Christensen: We want to be a gate opener to the industry and help people find their way.

How are the Nordic films doing this year in the festivals?

Anttolainen: It's a colourful collection with very different types of films.

Lundquist: Films like BUBBLE (by Aleks Salmenperä, Finland) and THE FALL address young people, but there is little content for young children. It seems like Norway – a country that for a long time has been going really strong – this year mainly seemed to produce Christmas animation, until they luckily came up with DANCING QUEEN (by Aurora Gossé). When I started at BUFF, 15 years ago, we had at least five strong, new live action features from Denmark every year, but nowadays they seem to be producing mainly animation. From Sweden we had NELLY RAPP - THE SECRET OF THE BLACK FOREST (by Johan



Rosell).

How crucial are Nordic titles to the programme of the NOJSE festivals?

Anttolainen: In the Oulu programme, Nordic films – both features and shorts – always had an important share. Some Finnish films travel easily to other Nordic festivals but we also have titles – like RICKY RAPPER – that mainly target the domestic audience with a typical Finnish type of humour. They will not be screened in festivals abroad.

Lundquist: Ever since TERKEL IN TROUBLE, Denmark also produces films with a typical Danish touch, ex-

PLICITLY addressing older audiences with politically incorrect humour that wouldn't work anywhere else in Scandinavia. I don't think Sweden has this type of children's films targeting the domestic audience.

Anttolainen: Perhaps the LASSE-MAJA #8 for our festival would feel like screening FAST AND FURIOUS 6.

–
Gert Hermans

