

Katarina Kerekesova about THE WEBSTERS MOVIE

“Yesterday I killed a fly”

Some people start screaming as soon as they see a spider. Anyone watching THE WEBSTERS MOVIE can hardly sit and scream for 70 minutes. Maybe ‘laugh and enjoy’ is a better option? Because the encounter with this lovable spider family is pleasant and care-free.

You may know THE WEBSTERS from a TV series, in this film several episodes are linked by one larger story. Director and author Katarina Kerekesova stays true to her usual tone: loving observations with a big heart for everything living, and firmly rooted in everyday life as even very young viewers know and recognise it.

Was there a story this time that was too big to be told in a short episode?

Katarina Kerekesova: I wanted to tell a story about themes like tolerance, and judgement towards the unknown, which I consider very strong and important for children nowadays. Therefore we needed more space for the story to unravel itself. The TV episode format that we are used to is limit-

ed in time (12’) and structure. The story we had in mind this time didn’t fit into those outlined structures. By connecting different short episodes – with several small adventures merging into one - we aimed to create a kind of collage that could expand the usual values.

In general the problems and challenges the Websters are facing, are a reflection of our everyday human lives. What are their crucial challenges to face in this film?

Kerekesova: Just like our TV series MIMI & LISA, THE WEBSTERS are about cooperation, about the ability to understand different beings with empathy and without prejudices. In my opinion, this is the most important thing we need to show to children. For this movie I wanted to concentrate specifically on our fears for the unknown and how quickly humans AND spiders can jump into conclusions, without any real proof. Nowadays we are too easily swayed by prejudices, assumptions and discriminations.



The idea of a fly farm is totally disgusting, and moth larvae probably in reality looks like horrible creatures. Yet you make it all look funny, cute and sweet.

Kerekesova: It’s just how you look at the world. By our norms and standards you could say that, yes, a swarm of moth babies doesn’t look particularly appealing. However we have to remind ourselves that we aren’t the only creatures living on this planet and therefore our opinions aren’t universal by any means. Imagine how ridiculous we must look to them!

How long ago since you killed a fly?

Kerekesova: Yesterday. I have one small spider in the window, who ate one a few days ago, so we make quite a good team together. Of course I still watch some insects with a certain prejudice, especially mosquitos.

An interesting episode is the one about Momo, a newcomer among the insects in the building. You use this episode to tell a story about inclusion.

Kerekesova: Inclusion doesn’t always come easily, so I really wanted to highlight the importance of listening

to the stories of others, before dismissing people as weird or different. Often, our misconceptions arise from a lack of knowledge about 'the others'. Once we know their stories and see glimpses of ourselves reflected in them, we can include them more easily in our world.

The star of the film is the young spider Lili. But she is surrounded by interesting other characters, like her brother Hugo. As a rebellious teenager, he is not among your target audience, but the character might be recognisable for them.

Kerekesova: As I grew up with two older brothers, I wanted to grant the same to Lili. Hugo is a teenager, often indifferent or grumpy, but in times when Lili really needs his help, he always comes to the rescue. For Lili he is an important role model, who challenges her to new things. Together they are a perfect example of love among siblings.

And there is the remarkable grandmother figure, who is 'a star' in her own particular way. Could it be that there's a glimpse of dementia looking around the corner?

Kerekesova: She simply is a grand figure, full of experiences from the past and knowledge of the world. She can

lift your spirits with silly remarks, but can always pinpoint the importance of things, if needed. Because of her age she has no problem speaking up bluntly. As for her short-term memory, I wouldn't say it's dementia, rather I would interpret it as focusing on the things that truly matter the most.

When animating insects I guess the eyes and legs can be rather challenging, as there are so many of them.

Kerekesova: Of course the animation is extra challenging; all legs and arms have to move in harmony with one another, and you can't copy-pasting those movements usually makes an unnatural impression. The eyes do move simultaneously, but with four of them it's no easy task. Sometimes our animators are sick and tired of all those hands, legs and eyes. But in the end, they're also attached to them. When the production of the last WEBSTERS episodes came closer, it was often mentioned how much they would miss them.

Did you have to watch hours and hours of YouTube clips to collect the right insect documentation?

Kerekesova: In the beginning, yes, but now I just try to observe my surroundings and find inspiration there. I



certainly have more books on insects than other households, but we used plenty of our own imagination to create these spiders and their friends.

It's a recurring theme in children's films but can you explain to a non-expert what is so special about flying a kite?

Kerekesova: It is all about the joy of imagination. A piece of cut out fabric can become a butterfly within seconds when the wind catches its wings. Its power exists only for as long as children believe in it. I found it beautiful that two creatures – one human and one spider – so different from one another, can imagine the same thing, and together created a game, tied to-

gether by one spider silk thread.

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Gert Hermans

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