

Training for Trainers

Viborg (Denmark) - 27, 28 & 29 January 2009

The Meeting of European Animation Schools and Universities

Attended by the representatives of the most important European schools and universities of animation, the 3rd **Training for Trainers** seminar, organised by Cartoon, the European Association of Animation Film, with the support of the MEDIA Programme of the EU and The Animation Workshop (Viborg in Denmark) took place in the town of Viborg from 27 to 29 January 2009. It followed a first seminar in Halle (Germany) in October 2006 and a second one in Ludwigsburg in October 2007. From 20 higher education institutions in 2006, the network has grown to 26 in Viborg, representing approximately 1600 students in Europe.

These unique seminars aimed at animation trainers and heads of animation schools in Europe have a double objective:

- to enable trainers to create a network, exchange ideas and programmes, to set up cooperations at European level and secondly
- to discuss current industry issues so that trainers and students are better prepared and educated to face the new trends and developments in the animation industry.

The **Training for Trainers** event opened on Thursday 27 January with welcoming words from **Cartoon** and **Morten Thorning** (General Director of The Animation Workshop). Followed a presentation of the six new schools/universities which joined the network, and which come from Belgium (Haute Ecole Albert Jacquard), Poland (Fine Arts Academy in Krakow), Portugal (Escola Nacional de Belas Artes), Germany (International Academy of Media and Arts) and Norway (Volda University College and Noroff Instituttet).

In the second session of the morning, **Paco Rodriguez**, International Media Consultant and previously Executive producer of Filmax on 6 animated features, presented an overview of the producer's job and his relationship with sales agents and distributors both for the financial and marketing aspects.

According to Paco, there are not enough schools teaching the multi-faceted tasks of a producer whose job starts at a very early stage during the development (with the scriptwriter and director) and film or series budgeting. He/she is involved throughout all phases of the film-making process from project development to film completion and tends to wield ultimate creative control on a film project.

He/she is the one who creates the conditions for making the movie and the TV series. In this respect he/she initiates, co-ordinates, supervises and controls fund-raising and manages the difficult exercise of balancing throughout production time: the schedule against budget and creativity.

Paco recalled the importance to teach the **individual stages** of a film production and the different phases of a movie's life up until its distribution.

The first year of film development can be considered as a market testing phase where the project is pitched to different sales agents. This is also when effort is invested in creation. The producer will immediately realize if the sales agents is

interested and if the film has a chance to be made (financially). Generally producers work with a sales agent who will test the movie with different distributors and try to get minimum guarantees for each territory.

If the test phase is positive, the project enters into its second phase: the pre-production and pre-sales phase. It is important for students to understand that it is not good to sell a film during the development phase unless the producer has the guarantee that the production can start. If the producer has sold the rights in the development phase and the movie is not done, he will harm his reputation on the market.

The third phase is when the movie is actually produced. The agent presents the film to different markets. The territories where the sales agent has not pre-sold may not be sold at all, or will be sold at a lower price: "the producers sell smoke; they are selling something that does not exist. It is difficult for a distributor to criticize a film that he can't see. When the movie is done, the distributor who sees the finished film will be tempted to lower the prices and find weaknesses".

Paco recalled that nowadays it is becoming difficult to pre-sell on the international market because of the great competition existing between producers. In order to achieve pre-sales, the international distributor and the sales agent must have a good reputation on the market.

It is important for students to learn about industry and the type of films they can make: "when a producer thinks of the kind of movies he wants to do, he/she has to think of what kind of player he/she wants to be in the international market." If producers want to tease the international market, they must produce films over €6 millions, at least to have a screen value on the property, a decent animation and a good story.

In the afternoon session of the first day, writer **Barbara Slade** expressed her thoughts about the way film schools could teach script writing for TV series. "Some people think that you must have qualities to be a writer", she said. "It is not always true. You can learn telling. What you have to have is a vision, an instinct. But you can teach the skills, technique, story structures, what makes a good dialogue or a poor dialogue. Especially in animation, you have to teach how to keep the action and how to tell a story visually. You have to teach how to be creative and not always tell the same stories."

According to Barbara, the way a project is developed is crucial. It is important to create a world that can contain a long series. The first thing is to find the right project. It is a matter of taste but there are some rules: a **strong character** is the first key element. Without this character there is no series. Secondly the script writer must find a "**hook**" for the series, the reason why people will be excited to watch the show.

A hook is 2 or 3 lines that are able to tell about the series, about the world. Writing TV series is not about words. It is picture, concept. It's not what the characters say but what they do.

The character and the hook are not enough though. To have a good script, the character must find a conflict. When there is no conflict, the story is boring. A

hero becomes a hero through the problems he faces. There is a hero with a problem. That problem has to be a part of the concept and a part of the show. If the hero is perfect and everything is going well, there won't be a script. But a problem is not the same for a 4 year-old child or for a 10 year-old child. It is the writer's job to know how to target the audience. The writer has to know who he/she is writing for. If the concept is well developed, it will be easy to **write the full story.**

Finally Barbara recalled that in any show, there are at least **3 turning acts**, which make the story interesting and surprising and make people involved in a series. It is the writer's job as a storyteller to learn story structure, and to learn about turning points.

In the morning of the second day producer **Phil Davies** presented a case study on why and how students could learn to build and develop the intellectual Property based on their creation work.

In more simple terms it means hanging on to as many rights to your property to control its exploitation (hence revenues) and keep your freedom as creators. You must arise much interest from the mainstream market and learn how to pitch a project to get the attention it deserves: write a very clear and short synopsis, do a good trailer, be determined on the rights arrangements and the financing. Developing an attractive property for licensing and merchandising without TV exposure is impossible.

Phil from Astley Baker Davies, created the animation studio with Mark Baker and Neville Astley who have been collaborating since 1994. Mark had previously directed two Oscar-nominated films "The Hill Farm" and "The Village", whilst Neville arrived from a successful career in commercials. The trio garnered another Oscar-nomination for the BBC series "The Big Knights".

Phil started the production of "Peppa Pig", a 104 x 5' pre-school series in 2002 following its presentation at the Cartoon Forum. Peppa is an altogether different creation diffused by Five and Nickelodeon in the UK. Though the target audience is younger, film makers will instantly recognize the distinct design and animation on show. Like the "Big Knights", the series is created using Celaction. Big round characters are juxtaposed on screen with mini midgets. The heads are flattened, with the eyes appearing on the same side of the face.

"When "The Big Knights" ended we wanted to make a series for preschool children" said Phil. "Peppa Pig" is basically about a young child and her family but the fact that all the characters are pigs gives us a bit more room for humour and mischief. The starting point for the stories was the everyday lives of 3-4 year-old children. We tried to come up with as big a range of storylines as possible, from the obvious (playschool, flying a kite, at the beach) to such things as Peppa helping Mummy Pig work at her computer. As in any family, there are tensions and siblings rivalry."

Phil explained that all the production was kept "in house": "We really wanted as much of the process as possible to happen in our own studio. I know from experience that as soon as a part of the production process happens outside the studio, that's when the problems start." As a consequence, Phil came up with the

following plan for the production: the studio actually animate 2 episodes every 2 weeks with 2 teams of animators.

Phil explained also that it was surprisingly not too difficult to come up with the first 52 ideas (one day!), mainly because all the stories revolve around family life and everyday experiences.

The success of the series brought the studio to develop big plans with licensing and merchandising and because they owned their property they could choose their partner Contender. Phil showed a whole range of products derived from their property: books, a toy collection, clothes... Contender dealt with Merchandising deals: with Pinnacle Software for a first videogame for Peppa Pig on Nintendo DS at the end of November 2008, then a Wii game early 2009. Pinnacle Software will be supporting the release with a marketing campaign including television advertising, print advertising and advertorials in children's and women's magazines, in-store promotions and a PR campaign covering TV, online, national and regional newspapers, radio and magazines.

Since Peppa Pig's launch in 2003, Contender Merchandising have secured a wide range of licensing agreements with toys by Character Options, books by Ladybird, DVDs and all apparel categories now best sellers throughout the UK high street & supermarkets. In addition, there are party & greetings products, bedding, interactive media, magazines, games, puzzles, accessories, homewares and confectionary already available or in development.

Internationally, Peppa Pig has been sold for broadcast into in excess of 150 territories.

Nickelodeon and Five created very soon Peppa areas on their websites and Peppa's own website has been launched in 2006.

Nevertheless the most important revenues are coming DVD sales. More than 1 million DVD have been sold internationally. This revenue alone can finance the full series.

Another 104 episodes of "Peppa Pig" have been commissioned again and the studio is also working on another series "Little Kingdom".

In the afternoon of the second day, **Eleanor Coleman**, who oversees the in house production of TF1 Jeunesse and who also manages TF1's existing website for kids (tfou.fr), explained TF1's policy towards animation and the online strategy of the group which is the 1st private broadcaster in France.

TF1 decided to restructure into several areas: education, children, entertainment, cinema, music. TF1 considers that competition is developing in the **new media**, rather than among cable and satellite operators. Only one of the 25 French cable and satellite channels is not losing money, and taken together these 25 channels total only 30% of the market share. The aim of the TF1 reorganisation is to acquire a knowledge base for the management of rights in the future. TF1 will seek to acquire the totality of rights, exclusive where possible. They believe there is no sustainable economic model for animation programmes through VOD. With exclusivity of rights, TF1 will be in a position to manage the exposure of

programmes, and to create a chronology of exploitation on the different platforms. It is important to teach producers how to conceive specific short programmes for the new media, in addition to the traditional TV series.

According to Eleanor it is also important to teach students the reality of the market and the policies of the buyers. Eleanor took the example of France, where there is no statutory obligation to force state broadcasters to invest in animation, whereas there is for private channels. TF1 must invest 0.6% of its turnover in French animation. Two thirds of this investment is used for pre-buys, i.e. acquisition of broadcast rights for a period of 3 and a half years. TF1 has the right to 4 repeat transmissions. The remaining third goes to French animation co-productions and acquisition of foreign series.

TF1 broadcasts 800 hours of programming each year of which 60% comes from the European Union. TF1 invests €21 millions in co-productions, pre-buys and acquisition. Within these 21 millions: 9.5 millions are invested in French production, representing 56 hours of original programming. In recent years TF1 has invested more money in fewer series.

Eleanor explained the way TF1 is exploiting new media. TF1's special website for children, TFOU (914 000 unique visitors in November 2008), contains some interactive elements, but they are mainly used for promotion. "This is part of our strategy which aims to both capture and retain children's interest" explained Eleanor. The interactivity reinforces the visibility of programmes that are broadcast. According to Eleanor "it is difficult to formulate a business model for the children's sector. Children today are extremely indulged, and are used to access when they want, where they want and above all for free. Expectations from interactivity have often been disappointed. The children's market is complicated, and payment online is still something that they are unable to master."

In the following session, **Anne-Carole Nourisson**, VP of Licensing of Vivendi Mobile Entertainment, presented ZaOza, the new multimedia platform launched by Vivendi. ZaOza is the brand name of the company called Vivendi Mobile Entertainment which is a new and independent company owned by Vivendi Group. ZaOza is a global brand name. As Anne-Carole said "in the digital world there was only one digital player and one brand, which was i-Tunes. We are built around a concept to provide top quality commitment. We propose to the end user a care hotline open 24 hours, 7 days."

The business model is not advertisement driven and the consumer pays its content.

Vivendi has been testing new business models and new ways of consuming content. Research carried out by Vivendi showed that: in the last three years, there were no real successful convergent models. Vivendi Mobile Entertainment is trying to find alternative distribution models. On the other side research outlined the fact that consumers want to share content.

The business developed by ZaOza starts from the idea that the consumer wants to consume entertainment on mobile or PC device. Whatever the brand, mobile operator or Internet provider, the consumer wants to be free. The ZaOza

approach responds to this new consumption model: direct to consumer distribution model. The crucial element of the distribution model is the fact that the service is mobile-centric. To be able to access ZaOza, consumers need a mobile phone and a number.

ZaOza's core target audience is 15 to 25 years old and the second one is 26 – 45 years old. This target audience has buying power and performing devices but does not have competences on how to download, buy and store content.

According to Anne-Carole it is important that students learn the evolution of the market and the kind of content new operators are looking for. The content for mobile and PC is very different from what producers are doing for TV. Platforms like ZaOza are alternative distribution avenues. The shows are very short for mobile and PC usage (maximum two minutes). Students must know the business models behind the distribution of content via mobiles and PCs. Vivendi for example is working on a dual model. When they place content on the store and the consumer buys the product, it is a revenue share model. When they place content on the flat fee service, Vivendi pre-buys the content from the right owner.

On the last day 4 animation schools presented the MEDIA supported project "Animation sans frontières". The project's concept arised from the analysis that students didn't know the business they were entering and had little knowledge of the producer's job. Conceived as a supplementary programme in animation production, it is coordinated by **The Animation Workshop** (Denmark), and is implemented in cooperation with **MOME** (Hungary), **les Gobelins** (France) and **Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg** (Germany).

A group of 16 students, 4 from each school, travels to every other school to follow 4 separate parts of an overview of the entire animation film production process, from concept development through financing to actual production management. Television and feature films, games and interactive media, traditional and cross platform production processes are covered at various stages along the way. Each of the modules runs over 14 days.

The first ASF Master Class started last October in Germany, followed by Hungary, and will start now in Denmark and finally France.

Animation sans frontières is now opening its network to other animation schools. Students from all over Europe can apply to the training initiative.

A final panel with the representatives of each school discussed the inputs received from the different professionals and possible themes for the next Training for Trainers session as well as how they could cooperate among themselves.

The representative from **MOME** proposed to have a day dedicated to the screening of the schools' projects. The screenings could be associated to some public event.

The representative from **La Poudrière** proposed to organise the next Training for Trainers seminar around the theme of new media, multimedia and new

distribution paths. According to many schools, it would be interesting to have several speakers presenting contradictory opinions about the same theme.

The representative from the **University of Wales Newport** recalled that the main direction for graduates is in advertising and design. These themes could be addressed in the next meeting.

Many participants raised the problem of students exchange: it has been proven to be difficult to integrate students from other universities or schools because there is no harmonisation in the curricula. The idea would be then to create some extra curricula events, developing, for example, short courses for producers.

Following **Mike Robinson's** suggestion, all the schools agreed to have a session dedicated to online marketing: how to promote in an effective way its own project through the Internet. Another theme that has been proposed is the way students can set up of a company after the school. The idea would be to have some concrete case studies from some young professionals, presenting their experiences.

The representative from the **University of the West of Scotland** stressed the importance to build courses on business to support the strong artistic course each school is doing. There could be an argument for extending the existing courses in a ECTS programme composed by a short course of one or two weeks. Each school could propose a short course in the area they are best in. Together the schools could work to create a post graduate qualification.

Things are changing so quickly that even the schools do not follow the evolution of the market. For example it's very hard to follow the evolution of the negotiation of new rights. Academics can work collectively to establish a research project to report on the areas where the schools need to know more.

Lastly there could be the possibility of establishing a data base of pedagogical material between the schools to exchange information and find ideas for new modules.