

Eli Stangeland

Eli Stangeland was born, 44 years ago, in a little island on Norway's West Coast. She did the opposite of what people normally do, study first, then have children. It is only after the birth of her son, Ottar, that she studied, first history, then administration (culture and film studies) and finally marketing. In 1985, she started her first job as a cinema manager in Haugesund. Because of her 5-year-old son, she developed a special interest in films for children and how they were presented to the public. Eli was the first to organize an official screening for kindergarten children, programming short films together in a 45-minutes program. The experiment was very successful. She then created a half-year program for schools that is now used by other Norwegian cinemas.

As cinema manager she spent a lot of time convincing distributors that it was worth it to screen films for schoolchildren at a cheaper price. On the other hand she also had to convince teachers to use films in their teaching. She succeeded in having all schools appoint one teacher as contact person for the cinema.

After 8 years as manager, she left the cinema to work as marketing manager for the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, one of Norway two official symphony orchestras. Here again she organized special concerts for kindergarten and schoolchildren. In 1998, she became the first manager of the Children and Youth Film festival in Sandnes, a position she held until the end of 2003. Today she manages her own distribution company, Corianderfilm, which specializes in films for children and youth.

" When I look at a film for children, I know right away if it is good. If, after five minutes, I still cannot guess how it ends, then it will be good. Otherwise it might be very boring. This can be a problem, because children films have to be simple, so that children can understand them, but if you ask me what a good children film is, I will tell you that it has to be unpredictable." It also has to be faithful to the child, and see through the eyes of the main character (child). A perfect example of this is "Miracle" by Natasha Arthy. Why am I so interested in children's films? Well, I still think that children are the most interesting human beings, also because I learn new things from them every day, and the challenge means a lot more to me than working with adults.

When I was working as cinema manager, I often felt very lonely working in the field of children's films. CIFEJ gave me the opportunity meet people who shared my interest, and that is so great. When I was working as festival manager, I got a lot of help and support from other CIFEJ members, and also from the organization itself. It is very important to have an organization where members can meet and exchange information, etc.

In my new job as distributor, it will be very important for me to get information about new and up-coming films and also information from other CIFEJ members about what's going on in the field of children media.

If I had only one wish? Oh, that's difficult, but money to make more films for children, is high on my wish list.