

Samuel Goldwyn
SAMUEL GOLDWYN FILMS



SYNOPSIS

Klara is a little cow, who lives in the city with her mum and dreams of becoming a music star. One day she receives a letter from her father whom she has not seen for many years and travels to the countryside to meet him. There, she helps to save his farm from a greedy businessman, makes her first friend and understands that one can be a star in many more ways than she imagined.



INTERVIEW WITH LISE I. OSVOLL

by Marta Balaga

Your main character, aspiring singer Klara, just keeps on going despite all the rejection. How did you develop her to be so headstrong?

With screenwriter Anne Elvedal, we really wanted to show a strong female character. But not someone without any flaws or weaknesses – we wanted to balance it out, in a way that she would be strong-minded, but also impulsive and reckless. We wanted to show that such strength could also come at a price. There is nothing more boring than a perfect character that just stays the same throughout the whole movie. They need to develop and go from one place to another – also emotionally. For me, that's the most interesting thing in life and in films. There are certainly two sides to who she is, and that's very human. We wanted our animal characters to reflect real human beings, real struggles and real relationships. Even though it's a film for children.

The way she looks reminded me of all these women who went to work during the World War II – especially the one from the famous *We Can Do It!* poster by J. Howard Miller.

I had that poster in my apartment! I always thought it was so cool and powerful, and I was definitely inspired by that kind of strength. Klara makes decisions without thinking them through and never asks for help, which is why she makes so many mistakes. At the same time, that's what so great about her. In the end, nothing can stop her from reaching her goals.

Your characters seem almost velvety – you actually want to caress them.

That was exactly what I was after. I didn't want that plastic, typical 3D look. I wanted to create a world you want to jump in. And yes, touch both the characters and sets thanks to that feeling of texture. I guess it comes from me appreciating puppetry so much. Luckily, this effect is not as hard to achieve as it used to be in the 1990s, although it's still a complicated process.





What drove you to the whole concept of televised talent shows? They seem to be more popular than ever, even though sometimes the participants want to attain stardom without any visible skills.

We certainly wanted to comment on that. It seems that young people just want to be on TV and get famous, doesn't matter for what. Fame, or some kind of notoriety, seems to be a value in itself. They really believe it will make them happy. But real happiness needs to be found somewhere within yourself and it also depends on your relationships with other people. These shows can be fun, but they are superficial. In the end, whatever you will achieve there won't necessarily make you more content, especially if there is no one around to share it with.

Klara obviously gets on that stage with no talent. It's true – her deepest wish is to be seen. Also because of her relationship with her father, whom she haven't been in contact with for several years, and her mother, who doesn't really understand what she wants to do with her life. She prob-

ably thinks: "If I get famous for something, maybe my father will notice me too." When she is booed out of the stage, she actually decides to get better. That's why she heads out to find her father – she believes he is a rock star, so who knows, maybe he could teach her? She hides her need to get to know him, pretending all she wants is to learn. As the film and the story develop, she actually understands she needs him on a different level as well.

Children's films and animation are sometimes slow to reflect certain changes in a society. But in *Cattle Hill*, you actually show a broken family and a single parent, struggling to raise a child on her own.

Our main focus was to make Klara struggle a little. She needed to overcome some obstacles. If you show a character surrounded by a beautiful, harmonious family, it would be more difficult to build a story around it. We wanted her to look for some meaning in life and we needed a proper excuse for her to go on that journey. It just seemed like a good starting point,

really, also because it's so common – many young people are trying to get to know their parents. They might be physically absent, or just emotionally detached. It certainly reflects the situation of many modern families, as well as those from the past.

Arguably, the most shocking part of the film comes thanks to the suggestion of mental illness. Over the past few years, it has become a subject people are less afraid to discuss. But weren't you afraid to do it in the film? We thought it might be a good reason as to why their relationship doesn't instantly "click". There needed to be something wrong. Otherwise, the film could just end right there. "Oh great, here is my father, all is well now." But in real life, things are usually more complicated – especially at the beginning. There is usually some struggle you have to overcome and in this case we decided to use the mad cow disease, also because we actually had to bring some humour in the film. If we would continue down the same path, it would get much too serious. And it



couldn't be just this family melodrama for kids [laughter].

In the end, we thought it was a win-win situation. Once Klara suspects her father of suffering from this disease, they need to take some time to get to know each other, also because his focus is clearly somewhere else. She needs to fight for this relationship. Of course, once we got to the scene when he gets electric shock treatment, I started to worry. I know people who have undergone similar procedures, mostly due to depression, and I was a bit concerned not to make fun of it. But we all talked it through and I think it works precisely because of the humour.

With frequent references to pop culture or politics, new films for children seem to be more parents-friendly. In *Cattle Hill*, you deal with some serious subjects and still find time for an occasional poop joke. Is it hard to keep this balance?

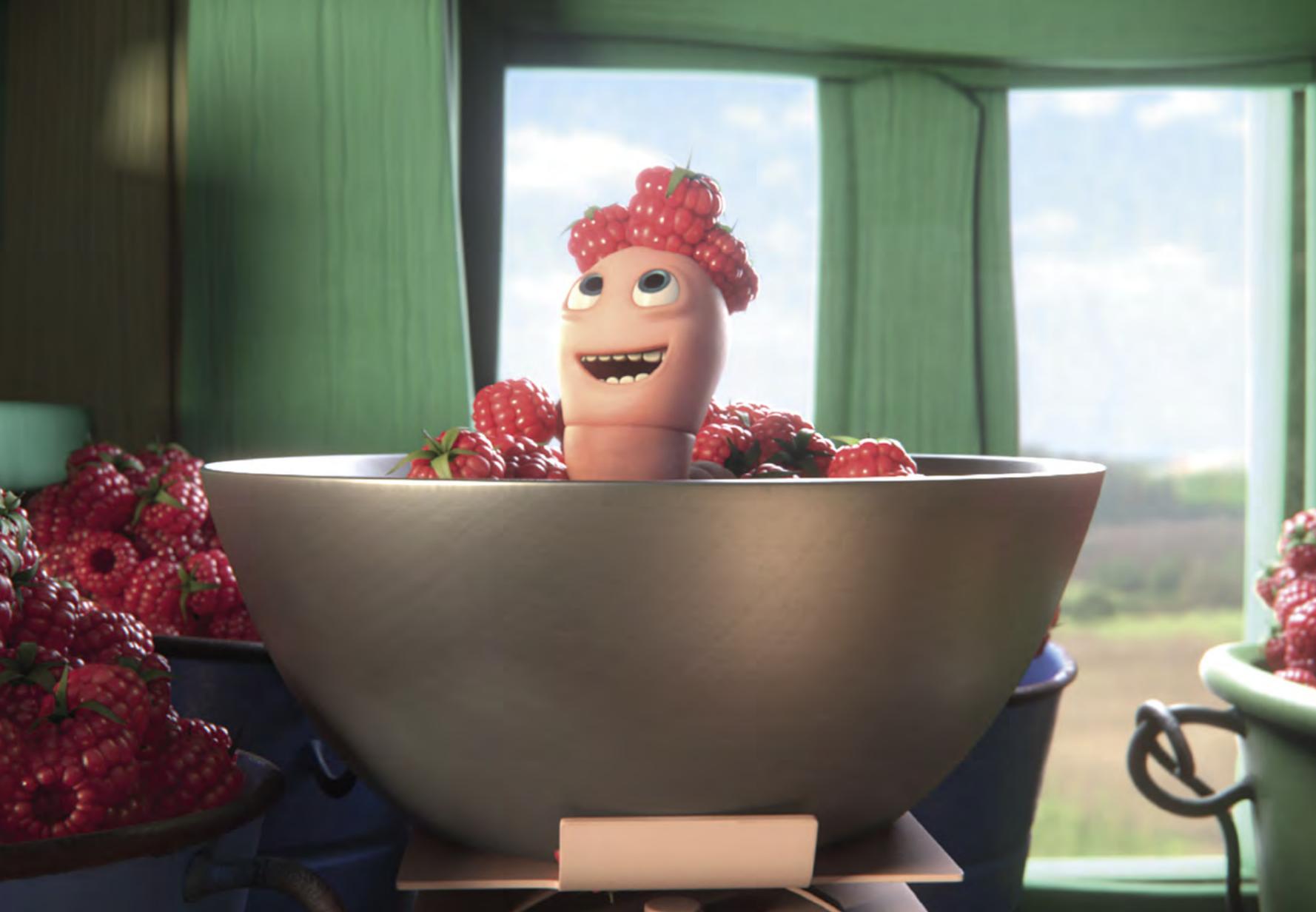
It's a struggle and I definitely think about it a lot. On some level, it needs to speak to the grown-ups and it needs to entertain the kids – as a filmmaker, your job is all about finding a way to do it. Which is why I always start from developing good, complex characters, because once you get that right, you don't have to talk about politics or put in poop jokes. Well, at least not too many [laughter]. That's always my goal: to create characters that both of these target groups will ultimately recognise and love. If you think about modern kids, it's all upside down. Few generations ago they were just viewed as small grown-ups that didn't know anything. Now, we see them in a whole different light. We know how much they bring to the world and how much they can actually teach us. I am trying to show it in all my movies.

Your film is almost a musical, with all characters having their own musical genre. How did you work on these arrangements?

Personally, I am very fond of musicals and I love using music as a storytelling device. It's very efficient and it can convey feelings so much better than words. From the beginning, I wanted to have a lot of music in this film, so we came up with this idea that the main characters should have their own musical personality. It was a fun process and it became a crucial part of their development. But it was a challenge to make sure that there is just enough music and it doesn't overwhelm the story too much.

I actually think that nowadays, there is not enough music in animation. Before it teamed up with Pixar, Disney used to be especially good at it, choreographing all these long, epic musical numbers. In *Cattle Hill*, all musical numbers were written by different artists and bands. Every single one of them had their unique style, so we had to make sure they would fit within the same world. There was a period of trial and





error, of course, but I think we nailed it at the end. When different people come together to work on something that crucial, you worry. But I was very clear about what each song should reflect. Except maybe for Fobetron's, but it's the villain's song anyway.

After *Elias and the Royal Yacht* and *Elias and the Treasure of the Sea*, both dedicated to the adventures of a little rescue boat, this is your third feature. What drew you to animation in the first place?

I always drew, even as a small child. But what interested me specifically in animation was puppetry. I was a fan of [British animation studio] Aardman Animations, and I made a lot of puppets and dolls. I watched every single one of their films, fascinated by the process and craft. It was probably the craft that I liked the most – the fact that you can build this fictional world all by yourself and it doesn't have to be related to real life at all. It's just your fantasy and imagination that set the limits. So even though I haven't made any films with puppets so far, I feel like with animation it's exactly the same. You create your own unique universe and there are no restrictions to what you set out to do.

It's usually considered to be the most universal kind of cinema. But there are many films, including Aardman's, that cherish local aspect as well.

I like a combination of both, but my main focus is on making the story as universal as possible. Also because I really want to say something about humans and their relations, and that already is quite universal. But then I like to wrap my story in something local. You can mention some Norwegian traditions, or mirror the look of the houses and the landscape. It adds uniqueness to your film, but the story itself needs to be universal. I am not a very plot-driven storyteller; I am character-driven. I am not that interested if everything revolves around, say, aliens landing in the middle of a city one day and people trying to deal with it. There needs to be something inside of my characters first.



CREW



LISE I. OSVOLL DIRECTOR

Lise I. Osvoll (b.1979) is educated in art, design and art direction. She entered the film industry in 2004 after graduating and worked as a graphic designer and motion graphics designer for many popular fiction films. During her studies she made two animated short films together with scriptwriter Anne Elvedal. Their graduation film won the award for best film and for the best newcomer at festivals in Norway. Osvoll co-directed *Elias and the Royal Yacht* (2007, a first film of Elias). Then followed the season two of the TV series *Elias* (2009) and the movie *Elias and the treasure of the sea* (2010) where Osvoll also wrote the script together with Anne Elvedal. Her next film as a director, *Cattle Hill* was released on the 19th of October 2018.

2018 *Cattle Hill*
2010 *Elias & Duppe searching for Ramsalt*
2008 *Elias: The Little Rescue Boat*

QVISTEN ANIMATION PRODUCER

Founded in 1994 Qvisten is today among the largest animation studios in Scandinavia, delivering award winning feature films, commercials and TV-series. Complete with in-house directors, a full animation crew and studio facilities, Qvisten provides a wide range of high quality animation from classical 2D to stop motion, 3D, special effects and motion graphics. Qvisten produced such animated films as *Louis & Luca and the Snow Machine* (2013), *Louis & Luca – The Big Cheese Race* (2015), *Two Buddies and a Badger* (2015), *In the Forest of Huckybucky* (2016).

DYREPARKEN – KRISTIANSAND ZOO AND AMUSEMENT PARK PRODUCER

Norway's most frequently visited family destination covering an area of 150 acres of wild Nordic terrain. The park is open 365 days a year, visited by around 1 million guests every year. The Cattle Hill attraction consist of a traditional Norwegian Farm and the traditional domestic animals who live there. It is possible to pet and cuddle with the animals, making Cattle Hill a very popular attraction for the smallest children.

CATTLE HILL

FILM INFORMATION

Original title: KuToppen
English Title: Cattle Hill
Genre: Preschool animation
Country: Norway
Language: Norwegian
Year: 2018
Duration: 65 min.
Picture: Color
Aspect Ratio: 1.78 : 1
Sound: 5.1
Available Format: DCP

CREW

Director: Lise I. Osvoll
Screenplay: Anne Elvedal
Production design: Are Austnes
Animation design: Will Ashurst
Sound design: Baard H. Ingebretsen
Music: Gaute Storaas

Production company: Qvisten Animation
Co-production company: Dyreparken
Producer: Ingvild Evjemo
Pre-production producer: Anja Nicolas
Co-producer: Jonas Røyem Ny
Executive producers: Ove Heiborg,
Fredrik Kiøsterud,
Rasmus Sivertsen,
Per Arnstein Aamot

