



we ♥ happy endings

Happy Endings Productions Ltd. is the baby of Eva-Marie Elg (Emie), one of the most versatile and ambitious filmmakers we know. Emie made her first film at home in Sweden at the age of 7. In 2003 she moved to London and quickly got to work writing, directing and producing a string of short films and animations that have screened at festivals (both in and out of competition) and events internationally.

Emie's first London film, *ICHIAI* (2004) cast a group of friends and acquaintances in an exploration of loneliness and distraction in a country that is at war half way round the world. She followed this with a short documentary, *A Trail Of Pictures* (2005), that followed London street artist Ben Wilson, viewable on the 4Docs and BBC Film Network sites.

In 2006 she founded Happy Endings to release her own films and to produce work by other filmmakers, returning to writing and directing duties with *Recognize Myself* (2006), a film about memory, relationships and self that was nominated for Best International Short at festivals in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland and the USA, and won the Bronze Clip prize at the German Jugend Medien Festival. The fully fledged

production company followed this up with *Sleeping And Dreaming Of Food* (2008), Happy Ending's first foray into animation - a surreal and dreamy collaboration with comic artist Kolbeinn Karlsson - and their most ambitious project to date, *Suburban Madness* (2009).

Executive Produced by Emie and directed by Phillip Figueroa, the documentary was filmed in Brazil and follows the patients of a psychiatric institute as they participate in the annual Rio carnival. Emie produced the project from London while the director was in the field, and the film had its premiere earlier this year at Dalston's own Rio Cinema, receiving widespread praise. In the meantime, Happy Endings have found themselves at Cannes, produced a range of t-shirts, and Emie has been nominated for a major scholarship by the Stockholm Film Festival. To date entirely self funded, the work of Emie and Happy Endings is a testament to DIY spirit and determination, determination which, going forward, Emie has in bundles...

**THE PICTURES:** When did you start Happy Endings Productions? What is your position within the group?

**EMIE:** I founded Happy Endings

Productions Ltd in 2006, the same year I was making the short film *Recognize Myself*. I am the owner and company director. We then collaborate with others in the field of film, art, music and theatre to develop projects within the company.

**TP:** Did you feel like establishing a group straight away was the way to go? Did you consider working solo, as Emie, before starting Happy Endings?

**E:** I started out making films on my own, without a company, but in 2006 I felt the time was right to take it to a new level and learn the business side of film-making. One of the things that motivates me the most about being an independent filmmaker is that it's not enough to write and make exceptional films, you also need to be a business/wo/man, promoter, accountant and many other roles. I love the idea of making film independently and Happy Endings is really just an extension of Emie. The two main reasons for starting up a limited company was to separate my money from the company's funds and to become eligible for more funding opportunities. Saying that, all our projects so far have been self-funded, but I'm hoping to get into the routine of applying for funds before heading straight into production.

TP: Your output has so far been very varied. Do you have a particular style or aesthetic you prefer, or is working in different styles important to you?

E: I think it's important to try different things before people label you as a certain kind of director and you'll find yourself stuck in a genre. I like to surprise an audience with very different films and I admire other directors who take risks and work with different styles, genres and formats. It's normally during the writing process I often see images that I'll later try to capture and these images decide the style of the film. So the style tends to play a big part in my initial idea.

TP: Do you have a favourite out of the films you've produced so far?

E: I'm extremely proud of the

Kolbeinn involved the Swedish band Kallioinia to do the soundtrack and it worked out really well! Last week the film received an honorary mention at Uppsala International Short Film Festival in Sweden and the film will screen again at Stockholm Film Festival in November.

TP: *Suburban Madness* seems like a very big project. How did you become involved in it, and how did you work on it from such a distance? Will there be more screenings?

E: This project was born behind the counter at The Gate Cinema in Notting Hill, where I worked for many years. Philipp Figueroa, the project's director, was a part-time projectionist and he told me about the Brazilian mental institution and that he wanted to go and make a film over there. Pretty much instantly I got involved as the UK producer. The whole

you found funding in the past, or are you on the verge of anything like that? Do you even think there's a point where that sort of DIY mode of production ends and 'proper' production begins, or is it all part of the same path?

E: In the past I've always been too impatient to apply for funding once I've got a script ready for pre-production, I rather jump straight into getting the film made. However, I'm currently one of ten directors nominated for a big Swedish scholarship called 1 km Film at Stockholm Film Festival. Just the nomination in itself is big, but in the unlikely circumstance that I should in fact win this scholarship, I'd definitely take a big leap towards a more professional career where I might actually earn a minimum salary as a director. Then there's another massive leap to actually earning good money on



L-R: *ICHIAI*, *Recognize Myself*, *Sleeping and Dreaming of Food*, *Suburban Madness*

documentary I produced, *Suburban Madness*, which dealt with a very controversial subject in the most colourful and amazing way. As for my favourite film, I'd like to say the short I wrote and spent the summer directing. I'm yet to see the rough cut though, so I can't be certain. The film, the way I see it in my mind, is the best I've ever made, but won't know for sure until I see it edited. I quite like letting the editor put together a rough cut first, so that the first time I watch the film I'm completely open-minded to the edit but with my initial vision of the story still intact. From this point the final cut can be perfected, but I find that watching every take and every phase of the editing can be very distracting and it makes you lose focus on the story you're trying to portray.

TP: *Sleeping And Dreaming Of Food* was based on a comic...to what extent did you collaborate with the comic artist on the film? How did it all come about?

E: Kolbeinn Karlsson, the comic artist, and I first met in 1998 and we've stayed in touch throughout the years. As soon as I read his first comic I wanted to try to collaborate on a project and luckily he was dead up for it. So we started collaborating by sending things by post, email and over the internet between Sweden and England.

crew, apart from the Brazilian producer, still photographer and sound guy, are based in London so they all flew over in time for the carnival with another ex-colleague of ours, Carlos Fialho, who's from Portugal and has a background in journalism. Everyone chipped in to make this film, so hopefully we'll make our money back at some point. We held the premiere at The Rio Cinema here in Dalston and we've submitted the film to festivals, but no more screenings are confirmed as of yet.

TP: And what about your new short? When will we be able to see it?

E: My latest short, *The Theory*, is in post-production but will hopefully be available before Christmas. We'll definitely have a premiere screening, so join our facebook group of ours and you'll get an invite. The film deals with the subject of loneliness amongst grown-ups. We follow a man in his 60's who's looking back at the mistakes he made to end up like this. We set the film in 1975 and late 50's, with great thanks to Nick at fantasticmundane who gathered the antiques and props for the set.

TP: In practical terms, how do you see Happy Endings developing? Like, have

making films, but that's not something that particularly interests me as a director. The bigger the industry around a production, the harder it is to stick to the original path you followed when you first started out. Just look at Michael Moore, the inquisitive average man gone millionaire filmmaker, who's now made a film about Capitalism, which is bordering on laughable. I hope he turns the camera to himself to make a point, if not it'll be as contradictive as an anti-fur protester wearing leather. Saying that, I think it's important to hold on to your style, beliefs and origin when you move forward in your career. Especially when you're moving into big budgets. But there's no reason why anyone should earn more money than they can spend in a lifetime. In any business.

TP: So what are you working on next?

E: After the success we've had with *Sleeping and Dreaming of Food*, me and Kolbeinn are working on another project. This time we won't base it on one of his comics, but make an animation with an original story by Kolbeinn. He's developing the concept and he's told me it'll be a very grey, but also very colourful story. I'm very excited to see what he comes up with.

[www.happyendingsproductions.co.uk](http://www.happyendingsproductions.co.uk)