

Missiepool16

Missiepool16 is a production of Eyework Film & TV Drama based in Hilversum, Netherlands. The program starts with a pink screen, displaying the text “A Rosan Production” in childlike letters and the song “Girls just want to have fun” in the background. The music stops, and a pubescent girl, Rosan, sits behind a desk. She looks directly into the camera and begins to talk about herself. This short film is Rosan’s video diary and shows a few short moments from the life of a contemporary teenager. Rosan is fourteen years old and lives with her sister and her mother Lies. Her parents got divorced a few years ago, and now her mother has a new boyfriend, Ernest, who is younger than Lies and childless. Rosan dislikes him intensely, because she feels that he disturbs the relationship between mother and daughter. Lies is torn between her new love for the exciting, adventurous Ernest and the responsibilities for her family. Rosan feels rejected and hopes that the intruder will disappear as quickly as possible. For a moment it seems as though she might get her wish, but her hopes are soon dashed. At first glance, Rosan seems to be a lively and sharp fourteen-year-old girl, but as the film progresses we learn that she feels deeply misunderstood. Her mother is largely concerned with her own life, her girlfriend Kim is only interested in boys and even her rabbit Henkie does little more than fill her room with droppings. The computer seems to be the only way to communicate with the outside world and to express her *raison d’être*. In her weblog, Rosan can build her own world, and for a while she seems successful until she decides to run away from home. She ends up with her father, and discovers that it is better to receive negative attention than no attention at all. It doesn’t take long before she goes back home to her mother. *Missiepool16* is fiction, inspired by web diaries posted on the Internet by contemporary teenagers.

Missiepool16 was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 12-15 category.

International experts’ opinions



Figure 1: *Missiepool16* – Rosan and her friends.

Missiepool16 turned out to be one of the most controversial programs and ignited a lot of discussions from the international experts. They expressed mixed reviews about the program. Few international experts loved it: “I think it is fancy and smart and a funny way to take the children’s language and just use it yourself. It spots on teenager’s language, I would say. I loved her performance” (female expert, Norway). “I think it’s very courageous” (female expert, Argentina).

The program dealt with the dilemma and the problems the girl faced in her life. She used her web camera to communicate her feelings. The usage of a web camera by a young girl sparked a lot of comments from the international experts. Many experts liked the fact that a program was made that dealt with the way technology was used by the children. “I really liked it, and I think it was very popular with kids. It was well-done for this target group” (male expert, Poland). “It tells the story about the consequences of the new technology and about this girl being tough. Even with all the communication and the talking about friends. Everybody, including the teenagers, can feel that she is a lonely girl. In this case, she uses a modern tool to get attention. So, it is very contemporary. I don’t think it is about modern technology. It is a story about a lonely girl” (female expert, Netherlands).

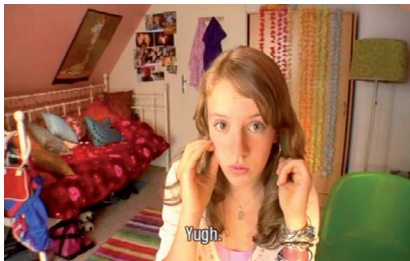


Figure 2: Rosan is videoblogging.

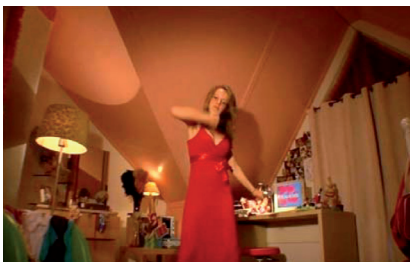


Figure 3: Rosan dancing in front of the web camera.



Figure 4: Rosan planning against her mom's boyfriend.



Figure 5: Rosan and her various experiences.

The broadcasters feel that they have to integrate the new media as children are using Internet in almost all aspects of their lives so they “have to be with them on the same platform” (female expert, Malaysia). They believed that it was a socially responsible theme. “This girl is looking at the world through the window of the Internet, and that is very essential for parents to know what is going on in the Internet. It is a very socially responsible theme, which is going on. It is right now in the 21st century” (male expert, Pakistan).

Some admired the program because it emphasized the problems that children are facing. “I actually liked Missiepool. I think it does give you a perspective of a teenage girl. Not that it is always a great perspective, but it seemed like an honest perspective of a teenage girl” (female expert, USA). “I liked the whole perspective. It was very now, very today. This is how they are communicating” (female expert, Jamaica). One thought that this program was a “fantastic prompt for all sorts of discussions and things like marriage breakdown, parents relationships with new partners, responses to use of the web – the whole poll, or even discussion with parents, but that it should not be put on the air where kids are going to watch it by themselves in isolation” (female expert, Australia). “Those are the bad things she will do when she doesn’t get enough care from her parents. Maybe that is the idea of the producer – to show how bad it could be for the child when she is left by herself” (female expert, Macedonia). “Many parents get divorced, therefore it is the problem that Missie had – it is a problem that many children will understand” (female expert, Germany).

The experts pointed out problems faced by children today when they are so engrossed with the virtual world that they do not have the time for real friends. The program showed that the girl was alone and did not have any friends. Perhaps that was the reason that she was talking to the camera. “This is a problem of modern Europe and our society; it is much easier for kids perhaps to speak on Internet; children who are chatting with people from all over the world instead of speaking with a neighbour of one’s own age” (female expert, USA). “The problem is that she has a lot of problems. Instead of speaking to friends, she speaks to the camera; she speaks to a virtual world somewhere” (male expert, Poland).

The experts felt that this serial was perfect for the target audience. “The teenage language and the target age fit very, very good. The format of the program is very charming. It really fits the target age. I liked it a lot” (female expert, Turkey). “Young people identify with this sort of stuff. She was always on the edge, and I think that kids love that in this age group” (male expert, Norway). “It did mirror the teenager’s reality” (female expert, USA). “This is one of my

favourites; I have to say. I think it fits very well the target audience, and it is a good story, well done” (male expert, Germany). “Whether it is good or bad or whatever, I really think this age group is going to watch this show. To me – I thought it was very engaging” (male expert, USA). “That was a good balance between the feeling of childhood and the feeling of growing up, because in reality she is still a kid comparing with some friends of hers” (female expert, Italy). “I think it is a really great piece to stimulate discussion for that age group. It is really fabulous” (male expert, USA).

A female expert from Germany liked the program very much but was not sure if many countries could actually show this program on the air. Indeed, many international experts particularly from Asia, in spite of liking the program very much, were apprehensive of broadcasting it in Asia due to its bold theme of talking about parents’ engagement with sex: “The same problems with this girl are in Syria or in Lebanon, but we treat it with them in a different way. We will not broadcast such film in our channels. Maybe it will be considered as a sex film – or porno film” (male expert, Lebanon). “I absolutely can’t broadcast it in Korea, maybe all over Asia, I guess. I liked the program very much. I want to use that format for other issues, but not the subject at all, because it was too much” (female expert, Korea). “I don’t think our children, our culture, is ready for something like this” (female expert, Philippines). Though it is very impressive, we won’t be able to air it in our country or channels” (female expert, Turkey).

However, there were a lot of moral and ethical issues raised by the international experts in the context of this program. A female expert from Germany was curious to raise the question to the experts if it was responsible to tell lies like the way she did in the program because “if you do this in real life you destroy a man’s life. As soon as the daughter says, ‘Well, he has raped me,’ then his life is more or less over.” “But saying that you have to invent a story about sexual abuse and sue your father-in-law, and then call it a blog and make a survey about it. I think that was a little bit irresponsible by the production” (male expert Columbia).

Many international experts were critical of the character of the young girl. Many thought that she was a “spoiled brat” and “self-absorbed”. A female expert from New Zealand found the program “shocking” and “hated it.” She did not like the way the girl behaved in the program. One of the points raised was that “the program failed to show any consequences of the bad behavior on the part of the girl” (female expert, USA).

Another topic of discussion among the experts was the originality of the program. They were curious to know if the program was original or fictional. “I was just wondering whether all the scenes were really

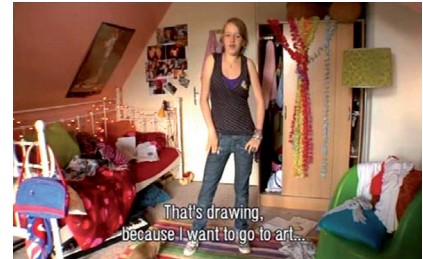


Figure 6: Rosan sharing her life in front of a web camera.

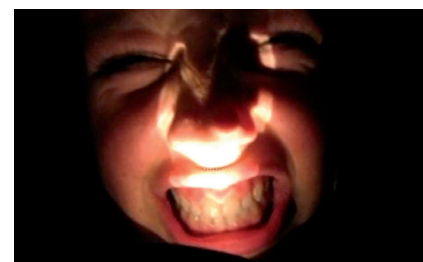


Figure 7: Rosan is upset.



Figure 8: Rosan’s mom came to pick her up from her fathers’s home.

Screenshots from *Missstepool16* © Eyework Film & TV

original or whether it was directed in some way” (female expert, Germany). A male expert from Chile thought that many film makers “mixed themes on the formats to impress the audience: mix of reality with film.” “In order to impress the audience who are now playing violent games, many filmmakers used different kinds of themes” (male expert, Chile). Some agreed that it was “adult fiction” which is a new trend. So it is not a reality show but a drama reality. “I was impressed by the style – how it was made. You talked about mixing up the different docu-style and fiction. I think it makes it authentic. You don’t know with people of this age what is real or what is fiction” (male expert, Germany).

International Youth Jury’s Opinions

In 2010, the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL included the votes of an international youth jury, organized in co-operation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12-15 years of age in seven countries discussed and judged 16 programs in the category 12-15 year-old-category. Here is a summary of their discussions on the program *Missiepoo16*.

The international youth jury from **Canada** had mixed reviews about the program. Some liked the program very much as they thought that it handled the problems faced by young people well. They thought that it was appropriate for the target age group, especially because it used new technology. “I think it was appropriate for our age, we see many other videos like this on the web and I don’t see why this one should not be presented” (female). “This is the kind of show that is a bit like rude humour, like South Park, if you have this kind of freedom, it’s great, it is over the top. I am a big Youtuber so to me it was fine” (male).

Few, however, did not like the program at all. They argued that it was inappropriate for their age: “I found that it was not appropriate by any means with our North American standards. There were some moments that were ridiculous and that made it kind of funny but overall, I did not like it” (female). “I am not sure it is at the right place in a Festival... too explicit maybe, I don’t think it was appropriate” (female).

The international youth jury members from **Georgia** liked the program and thought it was “a real video-diary” (female). Some thought that the program was “not appropriate for the young teenagers” (female). They did however, appreciate the camera work and techniques.

Many youth jury members from **Ghana** did not find the program appropriate for the target audience and that it may have negative influences: “It was not suitable for 12 to 15 year olds. I did not get the message they were putting across” (female). “The pictures were not suitable for our age group because it has been proven that when youth watch such pictures, it entices them to involve in sex and other problems” (female). Many youth jury members however could relate to the situation of the girl as she came from a broken home. “The teenager finds different ways to express her sorrow about her parents’ divorce. It shows how children feel when they don’t have people close to them” (female). Some youth did not like the use of foul language in the program. “I really understand what she did, but some of the language and scenes used were not appropriate for our age group” (female).

The international youth jury from **Italy** were sympathetic towards the girl for her behavior. “I think it’s very sad that a girl needs to sit in front of a web-cam to do these things and tell her mother’s affairs” (female). “She is a little silly, but it’s fine anyway... It can happen” (male). Few thought that the broken home was the reason for her unusual behavior. “I think she is the result of the fact that her parents

are divorced” (male). However, they did not like the theme of the program as they found it to be very explicit and bold: “It’s something brassy and inappropriate” (female). Many youth jury members felt that they would be embarrassed to watch the program with adults. “If I watched it with other adults I would be embarrassed because they all think this is the image young people have” (female). “I did not like it because she was telling her mom’s private things. I was embarrassed at listening to those things and watching them” (male).

Almost the whole international youth jury from *Lebanon* liked the program. They found it “interesting” and “original.” “Original idea, nice story, interesting to watch. I liked it a lot” (male). They liked the characterization of the female protagonist: “She is a great actress for her age” (male). They could relate to the problems that the young girl was facing in the program. “She is directly talking to our age group, I felt related, although my parents aren’t divorced but that’s the situation abroad. I totally understand the message” (female). They also liked the use of web camera in the program: “I liked the idea how she is talking to the camera...she is funny and interesting” (female).

The international youth jury from *Nepal* had mixed responses to the program. Few liked it in spite of its bold and different theme, but felt disassociated from it. “It is interesting to watch this film but it does not relate with our lifestyle maybe it happens in another part of the world” (female). Some thought that it was okay to watch it with their friends. “It is quite embarrassing to watch such kind of films with parents, it’s ok to watch only with friends” (male). They also commented on the production of the program: “The start of the film was very good, the camerawork and the music was also very good” (male).

Many of the international youth jury members from *Venezuela* had difficulty in understanding the program. “I did not know how to interpret it” (male). Some however, found the program representative of the present generation. “To me, I think, it is well represented because it is being viewed normally on the Internet in social networks of people. You upload your videos from your home if you’re facing problems at home” (male). Some, however, disagreed with what the girl was doing: “I found it to be very inappropriate for her to do these things” (male).

Target Audience 8,4	Idea 7,7	Script 7,1	Realization 7,3
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010			