

ALL ART IS PROPAGANDA...
GEORGE ORWELL

...AND ALL PROPAGANDA IS ART.
LAIBACH



A DOCUMENTARY MUSICAL BY UĢIS OLTE AND MORTEN TRAAVIK

NORWAY/LATVIA
98 MIN, 2016

**"EXTRAORDINARY...
THE STRANGEST NORTH KOREAN TALE YET"**
The Guardian (UK)

"FUNNY, THOUGHTFUL, KNOWINGLY ABSURD"
Variety (US)



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SYNOPSIS

Under the loving but firm guidance of an old fan turned director and cultural diplomat, and to the surprise of a whole world, the ex-Yugoslavian now Slovenian cult band Laibach becomes the first rock group ever to perform in the fortress state of North Korea. Confronting strict ideology and cultural differences, the band struggles to get their songs through the needle's eye of censorship before they can be unleashed on an audience never before exposed to alternative rock'n'roll. Meanwhile, propaganda loudspeakers are being set up at the border between the two Koreas and a countdown to war is announced.

The hills are alive... with the sound of music.

ABOUT LAIBACH

36 years on from their genesis in the then-Yugoslavian industrial town Trbovlje, Laibach are still the most internationally acclaimed band to have come out of the former Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Founded in 1980, the death year of the country's founding father Tito, and rising to fame as Yugoslavia steered towards self-destruction, Laibach have consistently opposed labels of any kind, be they "rock", "pop", "techno" or "industrial". Self-defined engineers of human souls, Laibach can make you think, dance and march to the same music.

www.laibach.org

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

MORTEN TRAAVIK



Morten Traavik is a Norwegian director and artist working across a wide spectrum of artistic genres and international borders. Trained as theater director in Russia and Sweden, the notion of the world as a stage and identity as role play is never far away in his works, as well as a characteristically blurred distinction between art, activism and social issues. His beauty pageants for landmine survivors, *Miss Landmine Angola* (2008) and *Miss Landmine Cambodia* (2009) made headlines and fueled discussions across the world. He is also renowned for a series of controversial collaborations with North Korean artists and cultural authorities, as well as being an authorized cultural affairs liaison for that country.

FILM SPECS

LIBERATION DAY

Norway/ Latvia, 2016, 100'

Directed by: Uģis Olte and Morten Traavik

Original languages: English, Korean

Subtitles: English

Produced by: Traavik.Info (Norway), VFS Films (Latvia)

In coproduction with: Mute Records (UK), Norsk

Fjernsyn (Norway), Staragara (Slovenia)

Supported by: National Film Centre of Latvia, Culture Capital Foundation, Arts Council Norway, Slovenian Film Center

Genre: documentary musical

Categories: art, music, culture, human interest, society, current affairs

UĢIS OLTE



Uģis Olte is a Latvian director and editor who enjoys staying playful when dealing with serious subjects. Equipped with senses of a musician and a belief that dreams, myths and fairy-tales can be useful tools for telling any contemporary story, he has created numerous original TV formats, music videos, ads and also 3 short fiction films - *The Red Spot*, *KK2678* and *King Of The Wild Things*. His efforts in documentary genre have resulted in two films - *Stuck in Stikine* (2007) and *Double Aliens* (2015), premiered at last year's IDFA mid-length competition.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Screen Ratio 1.85:1

Sound 5.1

Frame Rate 25fps

Shooting Format 4K

Screening Format 2K DCP

REVIEWS

**"A RIOTOUS ROCK DOC
WITH A SLY POLITICAL PUNCHLINE"**

The Guardian (UK)



**"HUMOROUS, DISTURBING, ILLUMINATING
AND SOMETIMES MOVING"**

MOJO's 17 FOR 2017 (UK)

**"IMAGINE GEORGE ORWELL DIRECTING SPINAL TAP
AND YOU'RE SOMEWHERE CLOSE TO THE MARK"**

Vulturehound (UK)

**"A WONDERFUL CULTURE CLASH, FUNNY,
BUT ALSO DISCONCERTING AND PAINFUL"**

De Volkskrant (Netherlands)

**"THIS BIZARRE, ONE-OFF CULTURE CLASH IS CHRONICLED
WITH DROLL, HIGHLY ENTERTAINING BEMUSEMENT"**

Variety (US)

**"PERHAPS THE MOST SPECTACULAR CULTURAL
EVENT OF RECENT TIMES, AND DEFINITELY THE MOST
SURPRISING DOCUMENTARY YOU'LL SEE THIS YEAR"**

Filmmagasinet (Norway)

**"THE GENIUS AND MADNESS OF THE WHOLE ENTERPRISE
SHINE THROUGH IN EVERY SCENE"**

Metall (Germany)

MORE REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

WORLD PRESS ABOUT THE CONCERT

NEW YORK TIMES

[Hello, Pyongyang: Are.You.Ready.To.Rock.](#)

CNN (US)

[Laibach Rocks Pyongyang with "The Sound of Music"](#)

AFISHA

[Тоталитарная инсталляция: концерт Laibach в Северной Корее](#)

DER SPIEGEL

[Umstrittenes Konzert: Laibach Spielen im Ponghwa-Theater in Pjöngjang](#)

THE TELEGRAPH

[Who Are Laibach, And Why Are They Playing North Korea?](#)

NK NEWS

[Laibach Rocks North Korea: Scenes from a Historic Concert](#)

ROLLING STONE

[Cannabis and 'The Sound of Music': What Laibach Learned in North Korea](#)

EXPRESSEN

[Live i Nord-Korea: Rockens Kanske Största «What the Fuck?!»-event](#)

POLITIKEN

[Provokunstner Sender Hårdtslående Teknoband til Nord-Korea](#)

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

[Dafür Kommst Mann Eigentlich in Lager](#)

OBSERVERS FRANCE

[North Korea swaps mass choreography for... rock music?](#)

"WHEN WE ALL FEEL THE POWER" A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTORS MORTEN TRAAVIK AND UĞIS OLTE

BY GUSTAVS TERZENS

«Paradox», I think, is the second name of this movie.

Both: Well, yes and no.

What does it take in context of this movie to swallow these paradoxes, this process of adjusting to each other brought out something else, some qualities from you, the Westerners and some from the North Koreans. Can you name them - what qualities did appear in yourself that were new to you?

Morten Traavik (MT): I have to say that although it was so intense for me, this one week that is the time span of the film is just the tip of the iceberg. The Laibach concerts in North Korea had been one year in the making before we actually got there. Directing it all, largely from Europe while communicating with people in Pyongyang, keeping it all together, and eventually also the tremendous amount of media handling, through all the interviews, trying to keep consistent and respond to all the different world media. But even so, that week itself for me, I guess, was probably the point of my adult life so far where everything that I had learned up until then was put to the test. Not only as a director, but as a human being. I mean, on every level there was something going on all the time that needed me to respond to it. It took me quite some months to «de-compress» afterwards. Because it was an extremely work-intense period, but also there was

so much that could go wrong (and almost did, several times). Like I told my wife when I came back: you'll have to regard me as a war veteran for some time, I'll need some time to re-integrate into normal civilian society...

Uğis Olte (UO): Well, I had two big life lessons during this filming. The first one was that I should really check where I get my information from and what the sources of our perception are. I went to North Korea with only knowing what the news tells me, about generals who get executed by anti-aircraft artillery and turtle farmers who get killed for not treating the Leader the right way. It almost sounds like a Greek myth. I am really not sure if we Westerners don't live in a propaganda space of the same magnitude as their propaganda, of course theirs is a totally different society, it has a totally different approach on how things have to be organized, but... I have to take everything with a grain of salt. I should not rely too much on the way information is presented in Western media either. And the second lesson was that I was absolutely sure that the way dictatorships or totalitarian regimes work is that there is a leader or elite, and then there is the oppressed society. Which was probably how it was in the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Union was too open to frequencies that could come in. People knew things, so they got spoiled. But North Korea, I felt that those people are



truly pure. They have not been spoiled by anything from outside.

Like by Pokemon, pornography and so on?

UO: Like...the freedom of choice. Because they do not have that much to choose from. They grow up in a system and they are a part of the system, there is no dictator and oppressed mass, this whole thing is the system.

Together as one.

UO: People are the system. And the only possibility for somebody to break with this system is to learn something that inspires them to do it.

So, it brings me to another level of understanding this movie, because you use popular culture, you use rock and roll to communicate with the regime of this country. As an instrument. How does rock and roll work for communicating with North Korea?

MT: I don't think there could be any other band than Laibach, as the world seems these days, that could actually do that. Who could be both rock and roll and at the same time, familiar in their musical style to North Korea. This is, of course, the main reason why I chose Laibach to begin with. That they were something completely different which the North Koreans had never seen before, but also in their image style, you know, in their history and iconography, and not to mention in the music, there are familiar elements with military drums and pompous, bombastic orchestra arrangements and so on. And also, not least, the lyrics. If you look at "Life is Life" or "One Vision", their golden oldies cover versions, they might just as well be quotes from the program of the Korean Worker's Party. "When we all feel the power, we all give the best.", "One heart one soul just one solution"...It's kind of the same soundbites.

The same frequency, right?

MT: Right. The beauty of it, the way I see it, is that Laibach is at the same time so unexpected as the first Western band to ever play North Korea, but at the same time it's quite logical. So this is also a paradox. I am very proud of introducing this phenomenon into a system that is not very fond of paradoxes.

However, in the next phase of your work process, safely back home crafting all this amazing footage into a movie with a beginning and an end, directors' egos started appearing again?

UO: Yeah, we had some cock-fights - nobody won and nobody lost. But after a while we invented a kind of regime for ourselves. We decided that we will make this film in a rock-band setting. That means three men - the two of us plus editor Gatis - in the same room, bouncing impulses back and forth between ourselves.

Like jamming.

UO: Yes, like jamming. And nobody can get too authoritarian about his own ideas. So what happened is that immediately there was some weird mix of dictatorship and democracy. If you were alone with

your wish and the other two did not resonate, your idea would not pass.

MT: But we have really grown together, I think. You could even say we're like "Brokeback Mountain" now, where I am the Jack Twist to his Ennis Del Mar [laughs] So, it really has been a process on our part to submit our egos to the common cause - just like model worker heroes!

It's not easy to get on with rock stars either, you know.

Both: You are quite right.

So how is it with Laibach being, so to speak, in the passenger's seat in the movie, I mean, they are not in the driver's seat. You are.

MT: We will probably get a little bit of a hassle from hardcore Laibach fans for that.

Yes. They provide this spectrum, this prism, the scope to look this actual subject on. But I still think that they come across as different from the classic image of a rock band, you know, the big egos, owning the stage...

MT: This is one of the key reasons why I find Laibach so interesting. It's not just the music. Laibach has always been about much, much more than music. They are actually much more of a cultural activism collective, you could say. And I don't think many other bands would have understood as instinctively as Laibach, that the movie had to be like this. You see what I mean, because it is not like a tour movie or like a concert movie, it's very far from a traditional concert or tour promo movie that might be produced by the band themselves. You know, it's not like Rammstein in America, or any such kind of more merchandise-like product. But you could also say that even the parts of the movie that are not about Laibach, are about Laibach. I guess that's true totalitarianism, or maybe rather totalism in action, right there!

The truth. Truth is a difficult word here, because you might expose yourself to several kinds of criticism - both artistic, moral and ideological.

UO: Of course. There's a lot of dynamite inside this film. But we don't have to come to a consensus with everybody in this world, we don't have to agree about anything that is inside this film. Like I said, I was there, that is what I saw, and I can guarantee that it is not manipulated in the film in any way. And if you have more experience and better empathy skills, and you can imagine that reality better than I do, then you are free to criticize it.

But I think the only true crime that the filmmaker can do in making such a film is to manipulate reality, to make it look different from what it actually did. I think that the only "crime" that we maybe committed is a playful approach, we did not take this footage or the events shown in this film too seriously.

Morten, you come from a liberal democratic, wealthy country. And, you know, you are making movie with a film team who have spent a third of their lives under a Communist regime...

MT: But I live in Sweden now, it's pretty oppressive!

[laughs]

MT: It's like a Soviet Union made by gay people. Feel free to quote me on that. You know, I am totally serious.

[laughs] So, specifically - not lesbian. Gay.

MT: Yes, actually gay, because a lesbian Soviet Union would be even more oppressive than a gay one.

What is this movie's mission? In one word...

UO: I think it is to liberate. The name of the film is «Liberation Day». Well, it's the name of a red letter day obviously, but it can also describe some kind of reaction that the viewer - whether Western or North Korean - will possibly have towards his world-view, maybe he will be a little liberated.

Liberated of his mindset? Of how we perceive...

Just maybe free to ask a few questions, why my mindset is the way it is. "Am I 100% convinced that I know how things are?"

Morten?

MT: Enlightenment for the people. Both ways. And a good show!



PRODUCERS



VFS FILMS

VFS FILMS is an independent film production company which houses a large group of talented filmmakers around a tight nucleus – best at telling human stories through award-winning creative documentaries or author-driven TV productions. With a skin rough enough to spend much time outdoors. Most of VFS films have travelled around the world, including nomination for the European Film Academy Documentary Award 2005 for Dreamland by Laila Pakalnina. We are proud that the Lithuanian official Academy Award entry in 2012 was chosen to be Ramin by Audrius Stonys for Best Foreign Language Film. Ukrainian Sheriffs by Roman Bondarchuk received Special Jury Award at IDFA 2015, which also resulted as the Ukrainian official Academy Award entry in 2016. VFS FILMS is a member of the European Documentary Network.

More: www.vfs.lv



TRAAVIK.INFO is a Norway-based interdisciplinary performing arts company in the borderlands between culture, politics, humanitarian and social issues. Founded and supervised by director and artist Morten Traavik, it employs the talents and experience of a big and diverse group of international artists, researchers, academics, musicians and producers, constantly developing and refining its self-labelled working method of hypertheatre. Often controversial both at home and abroad, the company's productions include Miss Landmine (2008-9), a beauty pageant for landmine survivors in Angola and Cambodia, Pimp My Aid Worker (2010) questioning foreign aid and a series of high-profile performance projects produced in close collaboration with North Korean cultural authorities (2012 - present). Liberation Day is Traavik.Info's first full-length film production.

More: www.traavik.info



CAST AND CREW

LAIBACH
EBER + SALIGER + DACHAUER + KELLER

with

MILAN FRAS
JANEZ GABRIČ
LUKA JAMNIK
ROK LOPATIČ
IVAN (JANI) NOVAK
MINA ŠPILER

and special guests
BORIS BENKO (Silence)
PRIMOŽ HLADNIK (Silence)

Laibach crew

TOMAŽ ČUBEJ
TOMISLAV GANGL
MATEJ GOBEC
GREGOR MUSA
SASO PUŠNIK

and

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA
COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
KUM SONG MUSIC SCHOOL, PYONGYANG, D.P.R.KOREA
MARY SUN KIM
JOHN OLIVER
DANIEL MILLER
MORTEN TRAAVIK
SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

Directed by
UĞIS OLTE and **MORTEN TRAAVIK**

Cinematographers
VALDIS CELMIŅŠ
SVEN-ERLING BRUSLETTO

Additional cinematography
UĞIS OLTE
JURE TEPINA
TOMMY GULLIKSEN

Editors
GATIS BELOGRUDOVŠ
UĞIS OLTE

Produced by
ULDIS CEKULIS
MORTEN TRAAVIK

Co-produced by
TOMMY GULLIKSEN
HANS LUKAS HANSEN
LINN ARONSEN
MIHA ČERNEC

Sound design and mix by
ARTIS DUKAŠKIS
ERNESTS ANSONS

Foley by
VERNERS BITERS

Colour grading
and mastering
KRIŠS ROZIŅŠ

Graphics by
VALNOIR

Motion graphics by
KOMPOSTER.SI

Concert animations by
OMAR ISMAIL ANDERSSSEN
KOMPOSTER.SI
TOMISLAV GANGL

Assistant editor and DIT
MIKS RAMĀNS

Translations
and interpreting
MARY SUN KIM

Additional translations by
YEUNHEE CHO
CLAUDIA GRENZER
IVAN NOVAK

Stills photographs by
TOR JØRUND PEDERSEN
MORTEN TRAAVIK
VALNOIR
GORM K. GAARE
MIKHAIL SLAVIN
DANIEL MILLER
BERNT NILSEN
MARIUS HAUGE

Additional goat footage
LĀSMA OLTE

Music mix consultant
GATIS ZAČIS

Legal advisor
MORTEN GRØNVIGH

Project manager
Norwegian team
GURO VRÅLSTAD

Project managers Latvian team
JOLANTA LIEPIŅA
AGNE SKANE

Project manager Slovenian team
NASTJA KOTNIK

Co-produced by

Norsk
Fernsyn



STARAGARA.

Supported by



Distributed by



Approved by





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