

## **THE BOOK OF LENINS**

16mm, 24 min., color, optical sound, English and German with English subtitles

A Rick Minnich Production. ©1993-96 Rick Minnich

Written, produced, and directed by: Rick Minnich  
Director of photography: Axel Schnepat  
Sound recordist/mixer: Christian Eulitz  
Editor: Markus Schmidt  
Music: Fernando Ariani  
Featuring: Rick Minnich, Roy Brown, Andreas Kämper

### Synopsis:

Spurred on by his zealous publisher, a wide-eyed American photographer roams the globe in search of the last remaining Lenin statues. But what he finds isn't exactly what his publisher had in mind. An ironic take on post-Cold War Eastern Europe.

### Filmmaker's statement:

"The Book of Lenins" documents my attempt to make a book about Lenin monuments, a project which began with a series of photographs I took during my first trip to the USSR in 1989 – several years before I struck upon the idea of making a film about my Lenin odyssey. In this film, I have coupled unusual uses of archival and original photographs with live footage in order to document both the voyage which began before the film project came to life as well as the film journey itself. The climax is undoubtedly the exhuming of the 60 foot Lenin statue which stood in East Berlin until 1992, and which the new German government had torn down and buried in a forest near the city limits. It is symptomatic of how the new governments in the former East Bloc countries are dealing with their communist heritage. I hope that my light-hearted American approach to this heavy historical subject will make the film equally accessible to audiences in both the East and the West, and give some insight into what has happened in Central and Eastern Europe since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.

### Festivals:

- Europäischer Salon für Liebhaber des jungen Films (European Salon for Connoisseurs of New Film), Potsdam, Germany, 1996
- Cinema Jove, Festival Internacional de Cine, Valencia, Spain, 1996
- FilmVideo 96, 47th Mostra Internazionale di Montecatini Terme, Italy, 1996
- 25th International Film Festival, Figueira da Foz, Portugal, 1996
- São Paulo International Film Festival, Brazil, 1996
- dokumentART, Neubrandenburg, Germany, 1996
- 39th Leipzig International Festival for Documentary and Animation Film, Germany, 1996
- International Festival of Documentary and Short Film of Bilbao, Spain, 1996
- 20. Internationale Grenzland-Filmtage, Selb, Germany, 1997
- FAK 97 International Student Film Festival, Vienna, Austria, 1997
- Festival of Non-Professional Films, Kelibia, Tunisia, 1997
- Blue Sea Film Festival, Rauma, Finland, 1997
- Filmzwerge, Münster, Germany, 1997
- Cinarchea International Archeological Film Festival, Kiel, Germany, 1998

### Additional Screenings:

- Nachlese dokumentART 96: Film tour through Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. Screenings in Waren, Lenzen, Stralsund, Bröllin, Rostock, Güstrow, Schwerin. March 1997.

### Prizes:

- 2nd prize "Baltic Herring," Blue Sea Film Festival, Rauma, Finland, Aug. 21-24, 1997
- Jury prize, Cinarchea Archeological Film Festival, Kiel, Germany 22-25 April 1998

### Television Screenings:

- REN TV, Moscow, Russia, October 28, 1997
- SFB, Germany, August 26, 2000 (part of blick.berlin.dok program)
- Phoenix, Germany, SFB, Germany, Dec. 25, 2000 (part of blick.berlin.dok program)

### Reviews:

"Humor and a good eye for recent history mix in Rick Minnich's student film 'The Book of Lenins'. The Californian, who studies in Babelsberg, tells in a self-ironic manner the story of his search for Lenin monuments for an American magazine. At the climax, he succeeds in finding the head of the statue which once decorated the former Leninplatz in Berlin. His tongue-in-cheek tightrope walk between two worlds was enjoyable." (F.B. Habel, "Vierter Europäischer Salon für Liebhaber des Jungen Films" ("Fourth European Salon for Connoisseurs of New Film") in *Film und Fernsehen*, Potsdam, Germany, 1996.)

"'The Book of Lenins' from Rick Minnich (Germany/USA 1996) is an outsider's humorous attempt to approach communist history. As an American living in Berlin, Rick Minnich was literally an eyewitness to how the signs, monuments and relicts of socialist history vanished daily. In his film, a photographer is given the assignment of finding the last remaining Lenin statues in the world. With humor and sarcasm, the filmmaker pokes fun at the short-lived media world, and shows how everything can at some point be marketed." (*Nordkurier*, Neubrandenburg, Germany, Oct. 18, 1996)

"Shortly before the collapse of the East Bloc countries, an American photographer receives a contract to make a book about Lenin monuments. He travels throughout Eastern Europe until one day the Berlin Wall falls and Lenin statues begin to crumble. His journey becomes a race against time as the Lenin statues disappear faster than he can manage to photograph them.

This fictional documentary film is characterized by an unpretentiously witty and ironic outlook on the relentlessly greedy world of the media, instantly commercializing anything and thus turning 'history' into an evermore shortlived product: Yesterday's idols?" (from the catalogue of *Cinarchea Archeological Film Festival*, Kiel, Germany, 22-25 April 1998)

"Rick Minnich's 'The Book of Lenins' is a small diary film which won a prize at an archeological film festival in Denmark (sic). In a pleasantly laconic manner, Minnich tells of a trip to Moskau in 1989, during which he began to photograph Lenin monuments. Back in New York, Harold, who likes to consider himself Minnich's manager, is very excited by the photos, and arranges for an advance on a book project with photos of Lenin monuments. Minnich travels to the vast Soviet Union, takes photos here and there, and does some research, including about one of the most beautiful Lenin statues which once stood on the Lenin Square in Berlin. In 1991, it was torn down for revanchist reasons — against the will of the masses! Whether Lenin, who was nearly 100 meters (sic) tall, is still buried on the outskirts of town could not be determined so quickly." (Detlef Kulbrodt, *die taz*, Berlin, 8 December 1998)

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