

The Annotated Field Guide of Ulysses S. Grant (61 min, 2020)

Written & Directed by Jim Finn

Few works about the American Civil War reach the level of historical detail and formal playfulness as this musical fantasia about Ulysses S. Grant's liberatory march through the southern United States. Jim Finn merges stop motion animation, 16mm film, and a 70s-inspired synth score into an unlikely anti-racist combination.

— Sheffield Doc/Fest

SYNOPSIS

For four years in the 1860's half of the United States was held hostage by an unrecognized white supremacist republic. Shot on 16mm in national military parks, swamps, forests and the suburban sprawl across the former battlefields, the film follows General Grant's path liberating the southern United States. Part travelogue, part essay film, part landscape documentary, it moves from the Texas-Louisiana border to a prison island off the coast of New England. But instead of relying on actors, vintage photos and the sounds of bullets and explosions, the battles are animated with the paper reenactments of hex & counter wargames and bubblegum cards from the hobbyist gamer subcultures that have sprung up around the Civil War. The sound and music are inspired by 70's crime films to celebrate the destruction of the Confederacy with the synth jams they deserve.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

Sheffield Doc/Fest

Dok Leipzig — 63rd Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film 2020

Doclisboa, Portugal 2021

BAFICI, Argentina 2021 (American Competition)

Prismatic Ground at the Maysles Documentary Center, NYC 2021

St. Louis International Film Festival 2020

Aricadoc, Chile 2021

The 59th Ann Arbor Film Festival 2021

SELECTED PRESS

- [Screen Daily](#) (UK, 2020): "Surveying the legacy of the Civil War through the strange remnants that linger in American society, *The Annotated Field Guide Of Ulysses S. Grant* is an essay film with bite, understatedly but convincingly arguing that the Confederacy's great shame has yet to be expunged from the national consciousness. Filmmaker Jim Finn details the journey US General Ulysses S. Grant underwent to systematically crush the Confederate army, but this isn't a documentary about military tactics. Rather, Finn photographs the war's most famous battlefields as they appear now, as well as explores the odd ways that the country has memorialised the conflict, including through board games and bubblegum cards. Told in nine chapters and a damning coda, *The Annotated Field Guide* may initially seem playful, but the seriousness of purpose becomes evident soon enough..."
- [Paste Magazine's Best Documentaries of 2020](#): "...On its own, Finn's arrangement of research remains rich and compelling, subtly exposing the core of The Lost Cause and its legacy. But what makes the film work on a level worth praising are such stories in conversation with images of today's public presentation of history: the highways where it has been paved with modernity, the gaudy products of myth-making and the silent landscapes where it is at once forgotten and remembered. —*Daniel Christian*
- Interview with [KMOX 1120AM radio](#)
- Interview with [KTRS 550AM radio](#)
- Interview with the Chilean daily [La Tercera](#)
- [Criterion Cast](#): 7 films to see at the Ann Arbor Film Festival

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Jim Finn's movies have been called 'Utopian comedies' and 'trompe l'oeil films'. The New York Times wrote, "Steeped in the obsolete language of revolutionary art, Mr.



Finn's meticulous, deadpan mockumentaries often play like unearthed artifacts from an alternate universe." His work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His films have screened at international, avant-garde and underground film festivals like Rotterdam, Valdivia, BAFICI, Edinburgh and the New York Film Festival as well as museums, universities, cinematheques and microcinemas. *The Annotated Field Guide of Ulysses S. Grant* is his first feature-length documentary. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1968.

Photo by Myrna Suarez

CAST & CREW

Created by Jim Finn
Soundtrack by Colleen Burke
Photography & animation by Jim Finn
Sound Design by Alexander Panos and Jesse Stiles
Film developed at Negativland Film Labs
Post Production Supervisor: Dean DeMatteis
Produced by Cat Mazza



ABOUT THE MUSIC

The soundtrack was created by musician Colleen Burke. She has brought together musicians like Jim White (The Dirty Three), Sally Timms (The Mekons), Michael James and Munaf Rayani (Explosions in the Sky) and Jim Becker (Califone) for their multiple film collaborations. Three of those film soundtracks — *Interkosmos*, *La Trinchera Luminosa del Presidente Gonzalo* and *Chums from Across the Void* — have all gone on to have some kind of cult musical status.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

The Annotated Field Guide of Ulysses S. Grant (60:05, 2020)
The Drunkard's Lament (40:15, 2018) + *Branwell Brontë's Role-Playing Game* (45:00)
The Inner Trotsky Child series:

Chums from Across the Void (17:30, 2015)
Zinoviev's Tube: Tape 2 of the Inner Trotsky Child (22:15, 2014)
Encounters with Your Inner Trotsky Child (21:00, 2013)
Sunday School with Franz Hinkelammert (52:00, 2012)

The Communist Trilogy:
The Juche Idea (62:00, 2010)
La Trinchera Luminosa del Presidente Gonzalo (60:00, 2007)
Interkosmos (71:00, 2006)

Dick Cheney in a Cold, Dark Cell (2:30, 2009)
wüstenspringmaus (3:00, 2002)
el güero / comunista! (3:00 / 3:30, 2001)

DISTRIBUTION

[Video Data Bank](#)

CONTACT

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