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Ulrike's Brain

Bruce LaBruce

2017, color, 55 min., German, English. **Producer** Jürgen Brüning, Bruce LaBruce, Sonja Klümper, Paula Alamillo Rodriguez, Jonathan Johnson. **Production company** Jürgen Brüning Filmproduktion (Berlin, Germany). **Written and directed by** Bruce LaBruce. **Director of photography** Bernd Schoch, Heiko Alberti. **Costumes** Katja-Inga Baldowski. **Make-up** Maria Trifu. **Music** BunnyCat production. **Editor** Joern Hartmann. **With** Gertrude Stammheim, Susanne Sachsse, Jonathan Johnson, Saskia Timm, Stefan Sandrock, Florian Töbe, Yves Hanke, Joseph Wolfgang Ohlert.

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Referencing sixties B-movies like *They Saved Hitler's Brain* and *The Brain That Would Not Die*, *Ulrike's Brain* finds Doctor Julia Feifer (Susanne Sachsse) arriving at an academic conference with an organ box. Inside the box: the brain of Ulrike Meinhof, which was saved by the authorities along with the brains of the three other leaders of the RAF after their deaths in Stammheim prison. Doctor Feifer can communicate telepathically with Ulrike's brain, which is directing her to lead a new feminist revolution. To that end, she is searching for the ideal female body to transplant Ulrike's brain into. At the same time, her arch-rival, Detlev Schlesinger, an extreme right-wing ideologue, arrives at the conference with the ashes of Michael Kühnen, the former German neo-Nazi leader and infamous homosexual who died of AIDS in 1989. When the two Frankenstein's monsters of the extreme left and the extreme right meet, chaos ensues.

The real-life events referenced in *Ulrike's Brain* are not so far from a science-fiction premise. After Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe, the four main members of the RAF, died under suspicious circumstances in Stammheim prison, their brains were removed by the authorities to be examined by neuropathologist Dr. Jürgen Peiffer of the University of Tübingen. Peiffer's examination of Ulrike Meinhof's brain led him to the dubious conclusion that an operation to remove a benign tumor in 1962 caused damage significant enough to have contributed directly to her subsequent terrorist behavior.

Supporters of the RAF, who refused to believe that the actions of the left-wing revolutionaries were the result of a sick mind, vigorously opposed this theory. The examinations of the brains of the dead revolutionaries, who some believed were murdered by the state, also conjured visions of the grotesque medical experiments conducted by the Nazis. The subsequent revelation that the four terrorist brains had mysteriously disappeared and were unaccounted for added a further level of science fiction to the entire spectacle. Only Ulrike's brain was finally located and returned to her daughters to be interred with her body in 2002. Or was it? In an even more bizarre twist, the brains of the remaining three RAF members have mysteriously disappeared, their whereabouts unknown to this day...

Bruce LaBruce

Bruce LaBruce, born in 1964 in Southampton, Canada, is a filmmaker, photographer, writer, and artist based in Toronto. Along with a number of short films, he has written and directed nine feature films, including *Pierrot Lunaire*, which was presented at *Forum Expanded* in 2014 and won the Teddy Award. Additionally, he has directed a number of music videos and written and directed theatrical works. He has written a premature memoir called *The Reluctant Pornographer* (1998) and a more recent one called *Porn Diaries: How to Succeed in Hardcore Without Really Trying* (2016), contributed to a variety of international magazines, newspapers, and websites as both a writer and photographer, and been a regular columnist over the years for the magazines *Eye*, *Exclaim!* and *Vice*. As a visual artist he has had numerous gallery shows around the world. His films have been screened in international film festivals and honored with retrospectives.

Films

1987: *Bruce and Pepper Wayne Gacy's Home Movies* (20 min.), *Boy/Girl* (15 min.). 1988: *Slam!* (8 min.), *I Know What It's Like to be Dead*. (20 min.). 1991: *No Skin Off My Ass* (73 min.). 1994: *Super 8 1/2* (105 min.). 1996: *Hustler White* (80 min.). 1998: *Skin Flick* (90 min.). 2004: *The Raspberry Reich* (90 min.). 2007: *Otto; or, Up with Dead People* (95 min.). 2008: *Give Piece of Ass a Chance* (15 min.). 2009: *The Bad Breast; or, The Strange Case of Theda Lange* (20 min.). 2010: *Weekend In Alphaville* (20 min.), *L.A. Zombie* (65 min.). 2012: *Offing Jack* (20 min.). 2013: *Defense de Fumer* (7 min.), *Gerontophilia* (83 min.). 2014: *Pierrot Lunaire* (55 min., *Forum Expanded* 2014). 2017: *Refugee's Welcome* (20 min.), *The Misandrists* (90 min.), *Ulrike's Brain*.