

DER SOLDAT MONIKA / SOLDIER MONIKA (Austria 2024, 106 Min)

Director, Screenwriter: Paul Poet (Foreigners Out! Schlingensiefels Container, Empire Me)

DOP: Simone Hart, **Editing:** Oliver Neumann, **Musical Score:** Gewalt

Cast: Monika & Jasmin Donner, Sarah Zaharanski, Maria Hofstätter (The Devil's Bath, Paradise: Faith, Dog Days), Mateja Meded, Philipp Hochmair (The Conference, Freud, Tomcat), Roland Düringer (Hinterholz 8, Eternal Life), Michael Thomas (Rimini, Paradise: Hope, Import Export), Sibylle Rauch (Lemon Popsicle), Neil Young (The Souvenir)

Producers: Sabine Moser, Oliver Neumann/Freibeuter Film (Great Freedom, Joy)

Synopsis English

The battlefield is gender identity. Monika Donner is a transsexual elite soldier, a poster figure for gender rights, and an author favored by the extreme right.

Quickly she, who used to be a he, becomes a solitary warrior caught between the ideological fronts. The psychogram of an impossible person, realized as an intensive cinematic collage, using actors to travel even deeper into Monika's strange mind.

Comparable Films: Four Daughters/Les Filles d'Olfa, The Act of Killing, Blood in the Face, Dick Johnson is Dead, General Idi Amin Dada

Short Director's Statement

As a leftist activist, I planned for a long time to do a film about the European drift toward the extreme right and why this seemed legit and sexy to a lot of people I would have never dreamed of to find this relevant. The majority I investigated proved to be Nazi dorks and complete idiots though. With Monika Donner I found a singular person with more depth, soul, history and complexity, whom I could approach as a Transperson on friendly eyelevel terms, a person, with whom I could mirror the political shift on intimate personal terms, but also confront the general bigot and self-righteous moral shallowness of the 2020s.

First Reactions:

The film is very singular. I was astonished by Monika - how she represents all the blurry zones that are difficult to think about these days. Fascination by the Nazi military power, and such a care for other humans. It really touched me how she is complex. The film conveys that in a very brave and nuanced way in which its form tries to follow the universe and imaginary of the characters. There's a romanticism that is surprising - a sort of hopeful energy. (Cintia Gil, Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, Sheffield DocFest, DocLisboa)

A personal journey through domestic abuse, gender dystopia, left & right political ideology, that lands in a world defined by universal human insecurities. The film addresses so many current (global) conflicts in such a sensitive, straight forward, and entertaining way. The direction is clever and touching. (Fredric King, Producer of Oscarwinner „Sound of Metal“)

Great and incredibly touching. Less a film about the person Monika but a cinematic portrait of a world deeply torn with itself. (Patrick Wagner, Berlin Wut Wave Rock Band "Gewalt")



Paul Poet Filmography (Full Length Cinema releases)

My Talk with Florence (2015, doc)
 Empire Me – New Worlds are happening (2011, doc)
 Foreigners Out! Schlingensiefs Container (2002, doc)

Paul Poet Biography

Paul Poet (director/author) was born in 1971 on an oil-field in Saudi-Arabia, later bombed away by Al Quaida. As the child of an Austrian petrol engineer, he was raised all over the Middle East, Europe and Africa, being an early witness to corporate exploitation, war and death. Since his puberty living in Vienna, he became a forming part of the local punk and electronica scene. He moved into film-making in 1996 after studying journalism and philosophy. His popculture-savy and activist films always deal with the central theme of social rebellion and the fight of the individual for freedom. Often rock celebrities like Alec Empire, Einstürzende Neubauten, Melvins, Neurosis grace his works as actors and composers. In 2013 his debut cinema doc FOREIGNERS OUT! SCHLINGENSIEFS CONTAINER (2002) was selected by the Biennale Istanbul into a global canon of political cinema next to names like Bunuel, Rouch, Godard. Following this, it was honoured with special screenings at MoMA New York, Istanbul IFF, Doc Aviv (Israel). Other major Cinema works: EMPIRE ME (2011), MY TALK WITH FLORENCE (2015) Poet was part of the main juries of Istanbul IFF 2015 and Haifa IFF 2016. He is also well known for his work as cinema curator for Filmarchiv Austria, Viennale IFF and Diagonale FF with several international book and home video publications. In 2019 he was honored by European Culture Festival Network WE ARE EUROPE as one of the „64 most inspiring European Artists, Speakers and Thinkers of the Year“ and following that named an Austrian Culture Ambassador for the EU-culture funds „Creative Europe“ by the Austrian Chancellory / Bundeskanzleramt.