

ULTRAS

A FILM BY RAGNHILD EKNER

WITH ULTRAS FROM GÖTEBORGS, BARI, BUENOS AIRES, SLEMAN, POZNAN, EASTBOURNE, BRIGHTON, LONDON, CASABLANCA, KENitra, CAIRO
DIRECTED BY RAGNHILD EKNER PHOTOGRAPHY FABIAN SIGURD, ANJA WINIARSKA, JOEL VIKSTEN, ABRAHAMSSON, MARTINA CARLSTEDT, NEIL WIGARDT
EDITING SOFIE STEENBERGER, NEIL WIGARDT, JOEL VIKSTEN, ABRAHAMSSON SOUND DESIGN PIETARI KOSKINEN MUSIC KANDBA, LUKE EARGOGGLE
COLORIST PETER MAGNUSSON SVT / CHARLOTTE GRY BÄRE MADSEN PRODUCED BY STORY / PASI HAKKIO STRÖM PICTURES / MONICA HELLSTRÖM
WITH SUPPORT FROM SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE / CESILIALIDIN, FINNISH FILM FOUNDATION / PEKKA UOTILA, IRIS OLSSON
DANISH FILM INSTITUTE / FILMSTOCKHOLM / FILMBASEN, THE SWEDISH FILM FOUNDATION / PEKKA UOTILA, IRIS OLSSON
AVEK / MIKKO PELTONEN, OSKAR FORSTÉN, FILMSTOCKHOLM / FILMBASEN, THE SWEDISH FILM FOUNDATION / PEKKA UOTILA, IRIS OLSSON
IN COLLABORATION WITH YLE / JENNY WESTERGÅRD, INTERNATIONAL SALES OUTLOOK FILMSALES





Logline

An insider's depiction of the worldwide mega-phenomenon of football culture.

Short synopsis

Ultras - the beating heart of football and a constant source of debate. The world's most popular sub-culture. In this film, we visit stands in eight countries, on four continents. We get to experience the sparkling energy and atmosphere that is unique for the football stands. At the same time, we gain insight into how a strong subcultural context can influence and be influenced by its surrounding social context. This isn't a critical review, it's a tribute.

Long synopsis

ULTRAS is an insider's depiction of the rich and diverse ultras culture from different parts of the world.

The film starts in the mist of the football stands, where a voice-over of director Ragnhild Ekner addresses the audience and starts the story. In Bari, Italy, an aged original ultra describes the origins of his passion for football culture. He has been active on the football stands since the end of the 70s, and gives an introduction to the subculture and its development, on archive footage from the 80:s. When he describes how drums and flags became an important part of the culture, we end up in a lively street in Buenos Aires/Argentina. From there, the film's journey continues and takes us all the way to Egypt and the ultras' great part of the uprising during the Arab spring. The journey goes through Gothenburg/Sweden, Sleman/Indonesia, Poznan/Poland, Eastbourne/UK, Casablanca/Morocco, never losing the focus on the details and the panorama of the movement. Violent clashes between supporter groups is one aspect, as well as with the police. But the dominating story is one of people uniting in creativity, solidarity and resistance.

The Gothenburg ultras in the film get to show the meticulous work in creating the tifo/choreography: hours on end in a huge storage space. Sewing, painting, building. In Indonesia, we follow the women creating their space in the football stands with a little told story about Muslim women being a present and visible part of society. The ultras in Poznan/Poland are known for creating fear with their aggressive attitude, unified clothing and synchronized chanting, and we get to hear an insider from the group explaining how this community might have saved him from a more destructive life of drugs and crime. The Eastbourne episode tells us about how the non-league movement turn their backs against the sanitized and commercialized UK premiere league football, where normal fans cannot afford the tickets anymore.

The grand finale of the film takes us to North Africa. No arenas in the world can give a stronger sense of the epic grandeur of a mass movement, such as the tens of thousands of fans unified in celebration of the Raja ultras in Casablanca/Morocco. Here we also learn about the oppression from authoritarian regimes that fear the united power of a popular movement. This theme is taken even further in the finishing chapter about the Al-Ahly fans in the Port Said massacre of 2012. Here, a progressive force in the 2011 uprisings, the Ultras Ahlawy of Cairo were punished for their dominant role during the Arab spring.

A unifying theme throughout the film is the reflecting and guiding voice of the director, Ragnhild. An ultra herself, she provides the viewer with anecdotes and reflections. Her mission is not journalistic but exploring. The film is aiming to convey the emotional roots of one of the world's biggest popular movements currently. It is a genuine and honest look from the inside, trying not to simplify and stereotype a fan phenomenon with its multitude of expressions.

Production facts

ULTRAS

Documentary
Duration: 89 min
World premier: Gothenburg Film Festival 2025
(Dragon Nordic Documentary Award Competition)

Directed by
Ragnhild Ekner

Producer
Tobias Janson

Co-Producer
Kristina Börjesson/Film i Väst
Charlotte Gry Daae Madson/SVT
Pasi Hakkio/Wacky Tie Films
Monica Hellström/Ström Pictures

Director Of Photography
Fabian Sigurd, Ania Winiarska, Joel Viksten Abrahamsson, Martina Carlstedt, Neil Wigardt

Editor
Sofie Steenberger, Neil Wigardt, Joel Viksten Abrahamsson

Composer
Kan3da, Luke Eargoggle

Sound design
Pietari Koskinen

Graphic Design
Alba Lange

Colorist
Peter Magnusson/
Söders Ljus

Produced With with Support from:
Swedish Film Institute /
Juan Pablo Libossart
Nordisk Film & TV Fond /
Karolina Lidin
Danish Film Institute /
Cecilia Lidin
Finnish Film Foundation /
Pekka Uotila, Iris Olsson
AVEK / Mikko Peltonen,
Oskar Forstén
The Swedish Arts Grants Committee
Film Stockholm / Filmbasen
Film Tampere
Göteborgs Stad

in Collaboration with YLE /
Jenny Westergård, Mikko Peltonen

International Sales Outlook
Filmsales





Director's statement

Football culture - an eternal topic for debate, a constant headache for the law. A subcultural mega-phenomenon that both reflects and influences its various social contexts around the globe. The beating heart of football. From the curves on the short end of the arena the ultras create an electric energy, a huge force, with their chants and choreographies.

With my film I want to make the broad spectra of people on the terraces proud of what they are a part of. Give all those who see the stands as their second home a confirmation that they are part of something big and powerful, something worldwide and society-changing, something interesting and meaningful. And create curiosity, contribute with an ounce of complexity to those who want to challenge their view of the phenomenon.

In a polarized time, the football stand offers an unprecedented meeting place. It sounds as a

cliché, but there we unite for our club despite differences in the other arenas of life.

A joint invention that breaks boundaries and blows up barriers.

There is also a balancing act between the constructive and the destructive, the balancing act where many of us feel most alive. Where else would we go, without this chance to ventilate? There, a small world of its own is created within the big one, a world where it is the ultras who set the agenda and have the power.

It's about the force of the collective, and finding power and meaning in one's life through a subcultural context.

I wanted to make a film for football supporters to recognize themselves in. This isn't a critical review, it's a tribute.

Director's biography

Ragnhild Ekner, born in Stockholm in 1982, raised and currently living in Gothenburg, is a director and co-owner of the production company Story since 2017. With roots in graffiti and football culture, her work focuses on belonging, the search for meaning, and the negotiation of power. She earned a bachelor's degree in documentary film from Stockholm University of the Arts in 2013. Among her previous works can be mentioned feature documentary "The traffic lights turn blue tomorrow" and the doc series "ROSH". "ULTRAS" is her second feature-length documentary.

Filmography

ULTRAS

2025 - writer and director

The Traffic Lights Turn Blue Tomorrow
2017 - writer and director

ROSH (series)

2016 - director

press release



The Film ULTRAS premieres at Gothenburg Film Festival – A Film about the beating heart of football culture and its political impact worldwide.

Ultras are the supporters who do everything for their club, bringing vibrant energy and atmosphere to the football stands. They are also a constant headache for law enforcement and have the potential for political influence that provokes authorities worldwide.

In a unique new documentary, premiering at Gothenburg Film Festival, director Ragnhild Ekner showcases ultras from Indonesia and Morocco to Italy and Poland—covering a total of eight countries across four continents.

“In a polarized time, the football stands offer a meeting place like no other. It may sound cliché, but we unite for our club despite differences in other aspects of life. It’s a shared experience that breaks boundaries and shatters barriers,” says Ragnhild Ekner.

Football fan culture is an ongoing subject of debate, but it is also a subcultural mega-phenomenon that both reflects and influences the societies in which it exists across the globe.

The beating heart of football are the ultras - supporters who see themselves as the team’s 12th player and dedicate themselves entirely to their club. They represent a movement that is elusive and inaccessible to most of us. While many have an opinion on it,

few have real insight. This is what Ragnhild Ekner’s documentary ULTRAS explores.

“With my film, I want to give those who see football culture as their second home a sense of validation—that they are part of something big and powerful, something global and socially transformative, something fascinating and meaningful,” says Ragnhild Ekner.

To highlight ultras as a global movement, she has traveled the world, focusing on themes unique to each location such as:

- How tifo (large fan displays) are created and performed in Gothenburg, Sweden.
- The unique presence of women in the stands in Indonesia.
- How football stadiums in Morocco have become a space to express frustration with the regime and its corruption

Since her teenage years, Ragnhild Ekner has been drawn to subcultures that challenge social norms.

“In the football stands, I have found a place where my voice, together with my comrades, creates a sense of power and unity. It’s an intoxicating feeling that I haven’t experienced anywhere else. I understand why people are drawn to these environments—especially in a world where it’s easy to feel small and insignificant. In the stands, we set the agenda.”

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Story

Tobias Janson, producer

Tobias Janson, born in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1973, is producer and CEO at Story, a leading Swedish documentary production company with offices in Stockholm and Gothenburg. His filmography includes award-winning, widespread and critically acclaimed feature-lengths such as *Hypermooon* (Grand Prix winner, Festival de Film Européen, Paris and Best Documentary Award at Docufest, Kosovo), *A House Made of Splinters* (Co-Producer, 2022 Sundance World Cinema Directing Award, Academy Award Nominee, Best Documentary), *Idomeni* (2020 Swedish Film Award nominee, Best documentary), *Lucky One* (2019 Eurimages Audentia Award winner), *The Distant Barking of Dogs* (Co-Producer - First Appearance Award winner at IDFA, McBaine Award winner at San Francisco FF, 2017/2018), *That Summer* (Telluride and Berlinale, 2017/2018), *Kiki* (Sundance World competition and Berlinale Teddy Award winner, 2016), *Fonko* (London IFF and Rotterdam 2015/2016), *Concerning Violence* (Sundance World competition and Berlinale Cinema Fairbindet Award winner, Best Swedish Documentary Award winner 2014), *Belleville Baby* (Berlinale premiere and Best Swedish Documentary Award winner 2013), *At Night I Fly* (Sheffield Special Jury premiere and Best Swedish Documentary Award 2011) *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (Sundance World Editing Award and Berlinale premiere 2011).

Story AB

was founded in 1998, producing creative documentary films for cinema, television and online distribution. The company is run by five award winning documentary filmmakers and two producers and office. Story also produces and represents additional talented filmmakers connected to the company.

Story has a high ambition in producing both personal and inventive films. Our main resources are groundbreaking stories and the talented directors we represent. Story is today one of the most important production companies focused on documentaries and art house films in Sweden and Scandinavia. Story

specialises in feature-length documentaries with an international reach, but we also produce short documentaries, fiction films, animated documentaries and commercial work with a documentary base.

Our filmography includes (selection) *Israel Palestine on Swedish TV 1958 - 1989* (2024, Venice), *G - 21 scenes from Gottsunda* (2024, CPH:DOX), *How We Have Loved* (2024, opening film Tempo Documentary Festival), *The Society of the Spectacle* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Megaheartz* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Labor* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Hypermooon* (2023 CPH:DOX), *The Villages of Roses* (2023, Tessaloniki), *Blomster* (2023, Gothenburg FF), *Love You Bye* (2023, Gothenburg Film Festival, winner of the Angelo prize), *A House Made of Splinters* (2022, co-producer, Sundance director's award, Oscar nominated), *Always Amber* (2020, Berlinale) *Idomeni* (2020, Tessaloniki) *Lucky One* (2019, Eurimages Audentia Award at the Gothenburg Film Festival), *That Summer* (2018, Telluride, Berlinale Panorama, Gothenburg FF), *The Distant Barking of Dogs* (co-producer, 2017, First Appearance Award at IDFA, FIPRESCI Award in Thessaloniki + more), *Shapeshifters* (2017, Competition sections in Gothenburg FF and CPH:Dox), *Kiki* (2016, Sundance World Competition, Teddy Award at Berlinale, Idfa + more), *Fonko* (2015, Rotterdam and London IFF), *Concerning Violence* (2014, Sundance World Competition, Cinema Fairbindet Award Berlinale, Best documentary at the Swedish Film Awards), *Belleville Baby* (2013, Berlinale Panorama, Best Documentary at Swedish Film Awards), *After You* (2013, Best Nordic Documentary Award, CPH:Dox), *At Night I Fly*, (2011, Best Documentary at Swedish Film Awards), *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (2011, World Documentary Editing Award, Sundance + more).

Our projects have something important to say to the audience. They all deal with burning questions in our contemporary society. Our long-time drive has been to reach a new audience by combining a captivating and fervent theme with an innovative form.

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