

Valiant! A Car, a Cause, and the Cold War

Published: 31.01.2022.

Valiant! A Car, a Cause, and the Cold War (Valiant! Brauciens uz brīvu Latviju), dir. Māra Pelēcis, 86', Latvia, 2022

Juris enlists his friend, Andris, to help resurrect the '71 Valiant "Slant Six" he's kept under a tarp for the last 25 years. rlvaded by earthworms and stray cats, layers of paint on the hood reveal a caricature of Gorbachev and "Nyet Nyet Soviet" slogans. The Valiant once chauffeured young Latvian freedom activists to Soviet embassies from DC to Ottawa, through the final years of the Cold War in the 1980s. Driving day to day between New York and New Jersey, the car's decor provided some needed PR for a country that few could find on a map.

Meeting Latvian-American organizers today, *Valiant!* reveals the unorthodox strategies behind their newsworthy protests. Now, at a time when Russia has waged war on Ukraine and Putin laments the break-up of the Soviet Union, it begs the question of whether Latvian freedom efforts against Russian aggression are in fact "just history"?



International Premiere 2022

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