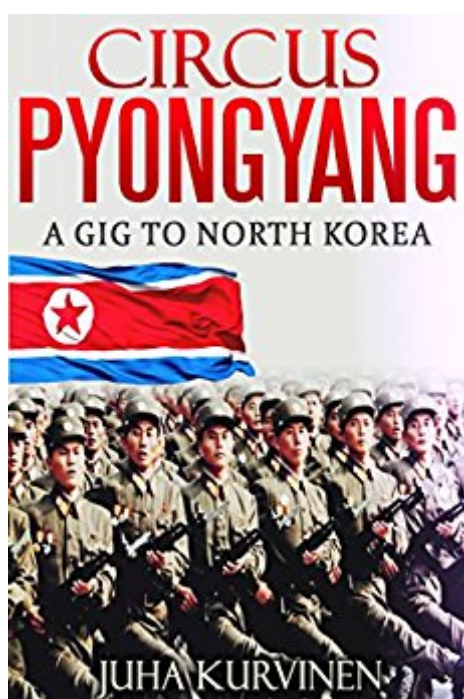


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Circus Pyongyang: A Gig To North Korea (True Story: What Really Happened At The Birthday Party Of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung?)



Synopsis

Juha Kurvinen, chainsaw juggler and holder of two official Guinness World Records, gets one day an invitation to perform at a circus in North Korea organized to honour the birthday of president Kim Il-Sung. Joining Kurvinen is the most famous Finnish professional magician Jori A. Kopponen, who has always wanted to travel to an "another planet". The party is being held at the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang. The artists have asked two journalists to assist them on this trip. It is strictly prohibited for journalists to enter the closed country. Constant fear of getting caught, brainwash and culture shock hits on every member of the Finnish travel party, when they have to operate under constant surveillance. Circus Pyongyang is a true story of a trip made by a Finnish artist entourage to the most closed state in the world, which is being presented as a terrestrial paradise for its western guests. The truth is something else. It's a trip to another planet, Circus Pyongyang."Circus Pyongyang was an enjoyable read, hard to put down. The language flows nicely. Structure is well thought out. At times Circus Pyongyang reminded me of the odysseys of gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson and his linguistic gimmicks."- Eero Karisalmi, Radio Melodia / Radio Auran AallotTranslated by Tomi-Pekka Astikainen

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Customer Reviews

A juggler and his magician friend get invited to North Korea to perform in an arts festival. The trip, financed by the North Korean government, turns out to be largely a propaganda opportunity, as television crews follow the international performers everywhere to turn footage that will be used to promote the government. Whenever they approach the performers, local journalists ask only a single question: What do you think of our Great Leader? If the author was actually North Korean, rather than an honored European guest, he probably wouldn't have survived long. No cell phones are allowed in the country, but Kurvinen and his highly skilled musician friend, self described by the author as "professional con artists," sneak a disassembled one past the inspectors and put it together as soon as they are free of minders. It doesn't get a signal, but before long the author is checking for bugs in his room by shouting into a suspicious-looking bundle of wires, "how the hell can 23 million people adore that fat bastard? No consequences from that indiscretion, suggesting the only surveillance is human: A dutiful North Korean guide named Kim is all over the foreign guests like a cheap suit. They can't leave the hotel without her, and she constantly steers the conversation to the Leader and the superiority of North Korean society to other cultures. The performers' heads start to swim from the constant propaganda...always the same story about the Great Leader, his accomplishments, his brave battle against American imperialists etc. And then there's the shrill March music all the time, even early in the morning when the author and his friends wake up hungover. Oh, did I mention the author drinks heavily?

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