

To Russia with Jazz

In the summer of 1962, at the height of the Cold War, the American government sent 19 young jazz musicians with the legendary "King of Swing" Benny Goodman on an adventurous tour of the Soviet Union. This was the first American big band on Soviet soil and the U.S. response to Khrushchev's huge cultural offensive, to the dancers and acrobats with which the Soviets had wowed the rest of the world. With their emotive and stirring music, the big band would open a Pandora's Box from which the "American way of life" would unfold in the darkness of the USSR, and awaken the American desire for freedom in the hearts and minds of the supposed archenemy. Under constant scrutiny by the KGB, they were witness to the repression of their Soviet fans. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra played 30 concerts to almost 180,000 people in Moscow, Sotschi, Tiflis, Taschkent, Leningrad and Kiev and with their music tore the first holes in the Iron Curtain.

Jazz für die Russen

History / Art

Film by: Konstanze Burkard
Length: 30' / 45' / 90', ev
Co-Production: sarabandefilm with WDR, 2010
Contact: sales@united-docs.com



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