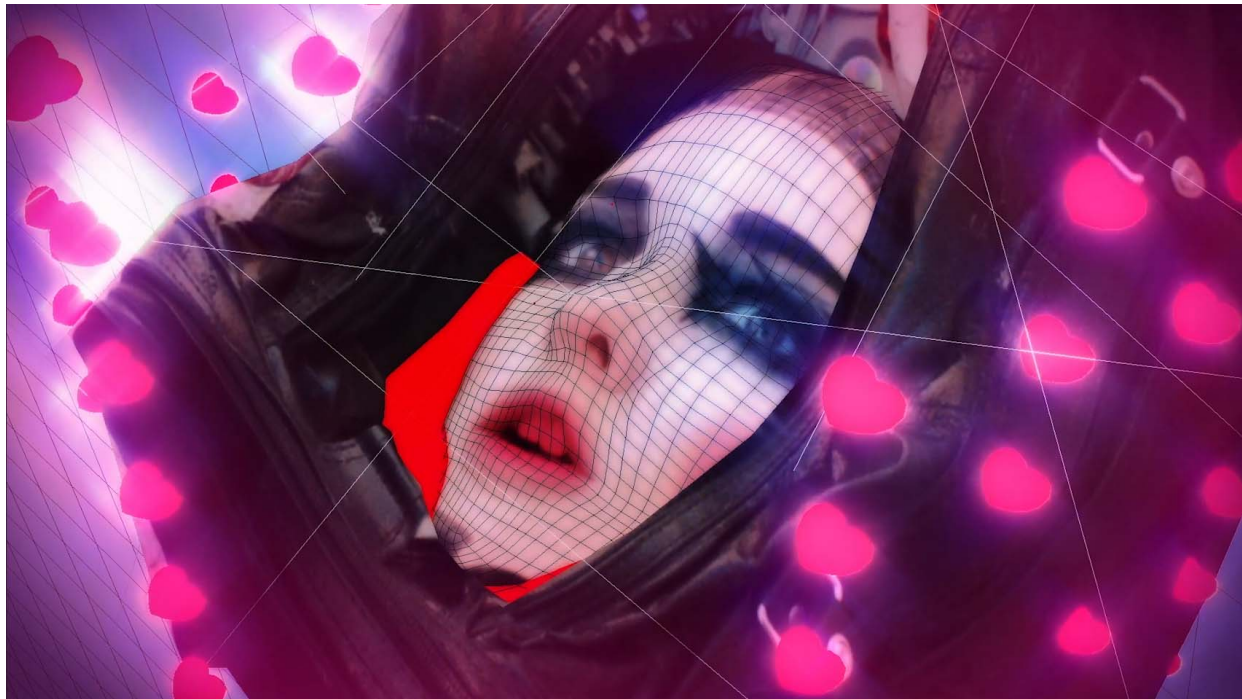


# ‘IF CYBERNETICS IS THE SCIENCE OF CONTROL, MANAGEMENT IS THE PROFESSION OF CONTROL’

/Interview by *Alika Gasimova*/

**C**hris Friend introduced his short film ‘Geneva Jacuzzi’s Casket’ on the ISAFF Festival. It took 4 years of analysis and patience to make it as precise as possible. The director shows who we all can end up being if we keep on living like androids. We talked with Chris about modern society where art becomes disposable and junk. He explained why he never liked living in the present and why he was always inspired by the world history and great artworks of the past.



Shot from the short film ‘Geneva Jacuzzi’s Casket’ by Chris Friend. Starring Geneva Jacuzzi

***Why did you choose the words ‘If cybernetics is the science of control, management is the profession of control’ for the epigraph?***

I’ve been working on my own personal mythos. It actually started with the card game I was developing that turned into graphic novel projects and different short stories. So I did a couple of film projects that are within that.

One of my biggest inspirations that I’m trying to explore is the actual science of cybernetics. People get confused because the term ‘cybernetics’ was picked up by science fiction and other fiction stuff. So, when most people hear the term ‘cybernetics’ they think about it in the science fiction usage which is a totally incorrect usage. The way science fiction uses it basically stand for bionic like replacement body parts. Cybernetics was a very big world changing science back in 50s. So the word ‘cybernetics’ was coined from the greek words ‘kyber’ and ‘ics’. ‘Kyber’ is a steermanship. So, it is a science of steering. That science was so huge at a certain time that a lot of other modern sciences grew out of it such as artificial intelligence, game theory, different types of social sciences.

planning. By the time of 60's that author I quoted Stafford Beer was hired by Chile before the revolution to run the entire country cybernetically. He was hired to build a center called the Cybersyn Center. This was back in 1969. The prime minister and all of his people were all in this futuristic-looking room with armchairs and different controls. Every economic portion of Chile was connected. They would see the live readouts from telex machines, like early Internet. All the advisors could see people's happiness levels increase or decrease depending on policy implementation. So, they could increase manufacturing or move things and have an instant feel for all the important data of the country. Unfortunately, before that room with the computing center could finally get finished there's the revolution. And he was overturned. Stafford Beer went back home to continue doing his work and wrote a book about it. But his work went on to influence all of global corporate culture from that point on. All of his books are focused on corporations and using the analogy between corporations and the human brain. He imagined different departments as living parts of the human brain. I've been reading a lot of that material for years. I thought about that idea and I wanted to express this world like that and then I stumbled upon the actual stuff and realised that this was what I was visualizing. It's a way of picturing the entire population and different future states depending on certain events or the perceptions of events. This is what this mythos is based on.



Shots from 'Casket'. Starring Geneva Jacuzzi

The back story of the of what we see in the short film is that none of what Kate Shaw sees in the film is real. I was hoping that people will subconsciously get the taste of it even if they couldn't process it consciously. My goal was the more people watch it that will get to their subconsciousness. They would have a sort of a filter to see the world that way if they looked into it and tried to piece together the things that don't really make sense on the surface.

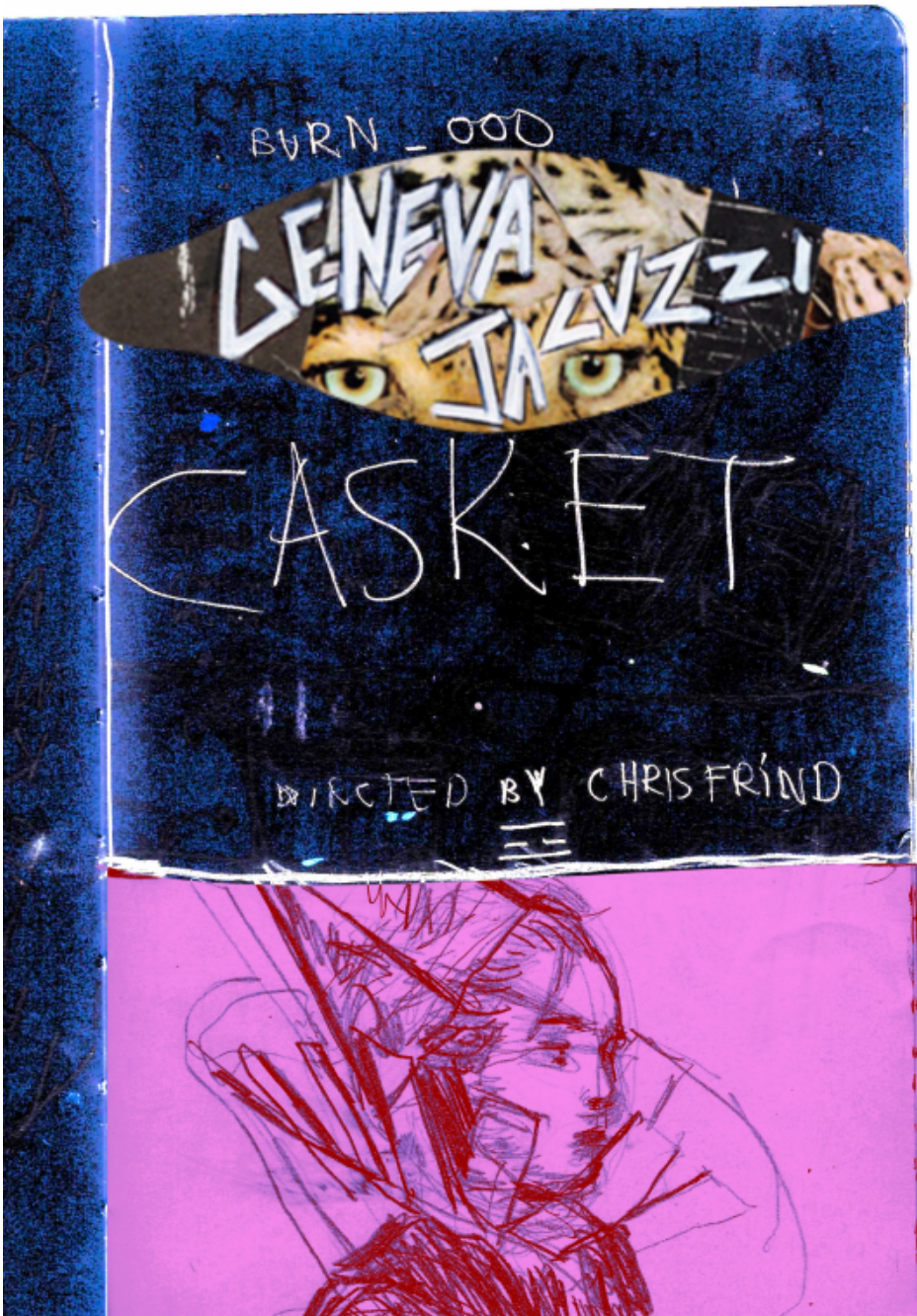
Talking about this world shown in the 'Geneva Jacuzzi's Casket'. There is that one world government called 'The World Wellness Watch'. Everything within this world is sort of the opposite of what it's name actually is. It's called 'The World Wellness Watch' because it's most concerned about everybody's psychiatric and emotional states. There's basically been a large scale catastrophe. And this new government was put in place to help everybody psychologically cope with the changes that happened.

The main character works for the government. Her job is to monitor the portion of the population and their emotional states. Like Rasputin. He was a sort of advisor to the tsar. It is similar to that when government had a sort of mystical component that's in charge of people's spiritual life.

Hopefully, all of the information I wanted the viewers to get might not be processed consciously but maybe it'll trickle in so that people can discuss it. Many of my favourite things have been like that. I love David Lynch movies. Particularly the 'Lost Highway'. When I saw the 'Lost Highway' in the movie theatre I literally couldn't stop thinking about it for three days. It feels like he took half of the script and burnt it. You know that there is all that context that happened off screen but the director doesn't tell you about

that were hidden from your conscience. It is the kind of filter that we all have. It might not let us be aware of certain things we don't want to realise. But somehow with having to make sense of things that don't seem to make sense, we're forced to come to a conclusion that we wouldn't really normally want to come to. If somebody told you this you would say — I don't want to hear. But if you come to it on your own, you can get where you want out of it.

***I've seen your artworks on the website. I'm interested if the pictures of the mental disease are based on your drawings? Where did you find the inspiration for your sketches?***



I carefully storyboarded everything out. It is all drawn. All the drawings in the film are my own drawings. My day job is doing visual effects for music videos. I want to teach myself new techniques through the project that I didn't really know before. One of the main ones was to take one of my drawings and to make a 3D sculpture out of it. The process is actually very simple. Basically you kind of have a white piece of clay and you project the drawing onto it. Then you can push it into place. That is the way I did a lot of those shots with the opening with the poster. Anyhow, I wanted to be able to put the audience into my drawings. Sometimes the drawing doesn't fully express the whole intention. I wanted to go deeper with it. I kind of came to it from the drawings first.

***Do you think Kate Shaw's mental disease is something irregular or is it something common for people in the modern world?***

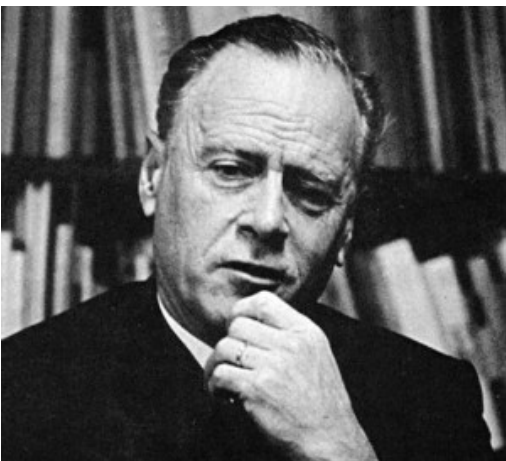
It is definitely common for all of us. The mental disease affects her biodrone. The whole idea from the backstory is that in this world certain laws are passed and people are allowed to have servants as long as they are actually cloned from the person's own DNA. That way it is not really the ownership over another person. It is essentially the ownership over yourself. So her servant is a clone of herself, basically identical. So to be put in such an inhumane position and to be seen as an object develops Kate's mental disease. They can not get out of this box of not being seen as human. I think it is such a common thing all around the world in all of the normal situations and for all normal jobs. It's easy to compartmentalize stuff and treat people as if they are some kind of a cog to get through or by and not really think about them as a full human. Everybody is treating each other that way and seeing each other that way. I think that is one of the causes of what people call mental illness. It is a big disconnection with seeing each other as the actual people. It is something that we all have.



Chris Friend

### ***Does social media affect that anyhow?***

Yeah. I've noticed my own experience with social media. I'm a pretty outspoken person. It's strange to cancel culture that seems to exist all around the world. My own theory is based on cybernetics theory. People view themselves as a part of a little network. Their goal is to move up in that network, gain social power, gain prestige. And if these kinds of nodes connected to them are going to damage their journey, they cut them off. A lot of times it is not even a personal thing, it is not something that someone is so angry that he cancels somebody. It is a kind of self-preservation. Someone wants to move up in their network and get the next job, they want to clean house and make sure they aren't connected to anybody who is stepping out of line.



Marshall McLuhan

Marshall McLuhan, the media guru from the 60s kind of predicted social media with the term he called 'the global village'. He went through the different kinds of media like the printing press and the newspaper, the radio and the television. He was looking towards the future. He imagined something that combined all of this but also shrank the world. Suddenly we would start seeing the world and treating each other as if we lived in a small village.

There are positive and negative ways to view that. You are in such close proximity to people that you can't really get that anonymity and get away. It gets easy to start to really scapegoat these people because you have somebody in your feed all the time. You look in your phone and feel the emotions you can't escape from. You feel aggression or whatever towards that person because of the lack of boundaries. Even before telephones people wrote letters to each other. There were weeks between the letters. Then you read the letter and you took your time to respond. You were not being forced to confront it daily. I think social media definitely played into that.

### ***Judging by the information you gave in your Director's statement, you were into the Neue Deutsche Welle. What attracted you in this movement and where's the connection between it and Geneva Jacuzzi?***

I was actually finding the movement back in the day in 'Myspace'. When 'Myspace' first started out it was really interesting because everybody would have these small sort of banned projects just on their little page. Nobody got into really obscure stuff and put the things out. I saw some of the Neue Deutsche Welle stuff and it seemed to me like a whole different kind of world. A lot of it came from East Germany. It was very

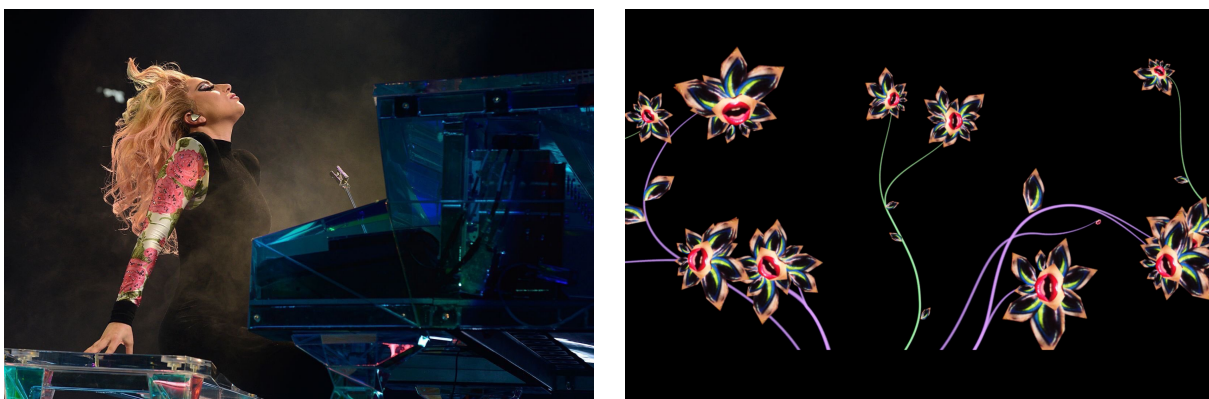
Neue Deutsche Welle different from America where things would just get sucked up and then spat out. It was like a true rebellion. Someone did Youtube projects on this topic as well. So I found the information about the band 'Malaria!' and all other different amazing bands. Their intensity really got me.



Band 'Malaria!'

I was on that for a few years and I saw a live video of Geneva within my hometown in LA. I thought that this was something from then. I went to her live show within a week. I was expecting to be disappointed. It was one of the clubs I would normally go to. I was just sitting and waiting for the next act when I saw this girl with crazy hair coming out from the dressing room. She made eye contact with me and motioned me to go up to the stage. That was pretty forward for a performer. I thought this would be pretty good. So I went up and it completely blew me away. Her live energy is better and more intense than any performance I've seen anywhere. Since then I actually saw her live for about 30 times. Each show is totally different. The whole different stage is like a mini play.

A lot of that reminded me of The Neue Deutsche Welle because in America and Britain we have this term called DIY — do it yourself. So, it has an extreme 'do it yourself' kind of quality where she would do basically everything on a zero budget. Things were made of styrofoam and trash bags and you had this epic, almost opera-like performances which were made out of trash. I thought that was kind of one of the best ways to show a sort of freedom from the corporate structure. Especially in America, there's almost worship of corporations, where people wanna get sucked up in that corporate cradle, having this corporation giving them money and the people, making them a star. They want to plug themselves into that machine.



Chris Friend team project for Lady Gaga

Even with art, I've done the drawings forever but you really need to have people to sit down and really absorb drawings. It takes a certain type of person, amount of energy and a certain willingness to look into that. I find that rare, mostly from other artists or younger people like teens. But the music video is so short that you can just pull people into some kind of a world. They almost forfeit their own control over it. You suck them into something and they are stuck with that emotional rollercoaster.

I did design the video to watch it for not only three times but I really wanted people to see it over and over again, like 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show'. People in America

just an experiment within that to see if that kind of thing can work. Hopefully it had a little bit of that.

### ***How did it happen that you and Geneva started working together?***

I went to so many of her live shows and talked to her a bit after. I was impressed by how open, genuine and sweet she is. She is super intelligent. We had these really good interactions at the shows.

Once she was having a big art show at the gallery. She put out a call for help and I volunteered. They needed a bunch of cardboard because they wanted to build some decorations. I was on my bicycle and decided to look around my neighbourhood for some cardboard. I went down the block and saw a big truck with the working class dude nearby. He was collecting all this cardboard to sell. The entire truck was filled with cardboard. I asked how much of it I can buy for 20\$. He showed me a giant pile. So, he drove the truck into the backyard of a gallery and we just unloaded all the cardboard Geneva's team needed. Geneva was super happy with that. We worked together a bit more on the things like that, projections and stuff.

I was on one of her shows and hearing the song 'Casket' I got this whole idea in my head. I wrote Geneva up a little pitch and sent it on Facebook: 'Hey! I'd love to make this short film for you'. She was just stoked. I showed her my previous short film that's actually the part of the same thing. It is a prequel to this earlier one I did. She loved that. We both loved the sci-fi author from the 60s Phil K. Dick. He deals with a lot of psychedelic metaphysical science fiction concepts. The idea was right in line with all the books that she likes. She was overjoyed. We went through a process of scenery mood boarding where I started imagining all the context outside the script. What are these things like in future Los Angeles? Who are Kate Shaw's friends? What is all of this stuff? She loved it. Next I did a bunch of storyboards. I made up the whole storyboard. I went through the entire thing and all the thoughts behind it. She was just totally on board.



We built the whole set in my apartment. Geneva came over and we had the costumes ready. She graduated from the beauty school so she did all of her makeup herself. She just won an award from the local Hollywood festival this week for the work in this short film. All that was phenomenal. Her performances were amazing. We filmed it all in three days. I assembled the rough cut within a week and she was blown away.

Image on the left: One of the mood boards for 'Geneva Jacuzzi's Casket'

The only problem was that at that point I needed to have all of my animation and visual effects live up to everything else — to her performance, to the costumes and the sets. That ended up taking four years. She was incredibly patient all the time. I kept her updated every day I was working, I sent her stills and she responded back very positively. She gave all the space I needed as an artist. She trusted me. We went forward with that and now we're done. The festivals seem to love it and we actually keep getting a bunch of awards. That's good.

### ***Geneva is one and only actor in the film. Do you see it as an advantage or as a challenge?***

the whole story. I started thinking about different ways that can work with it. I came up with the idea of the biodrone clone. These are two aspects of the same person. A lot of it is the way that we are trained to enslave ourselves. We put the innocent child part of in a cage and force it to shut up and do our bidding. That was the origin of that schizoid split that modern society causes.

Actually Geneva plays the Traveller too who is drawn and animated. I put her in a kind of basic costume and let her go through all of those moves. Then I hand drew it frame by frame. So, she actually performs everything. I think it's pretty cool. It is all Geneva.

***What would you call the main goal you achieved by creating the film?***

I really wanted to make the film addictive so people would watch it over and over again. I hope the more they watch it, the more aware they become. I hope this will make them think about how they treat other people and about the nature of dehumanizing people, seeing people as androids. I hope that people can see that it is actually sort of Kate's main issue. This is what's wrong with her. This is what creates XYZ-3 who is evil. She is the result of all that. That's what happens when we treat people that way and make our own enemies. Then we get surprised when it comes back at us.



Sketches by Chris Friend

***When you saw Geneva's show you realised that you want to work with her. Who you want to work with in future?***

The actress who played the role in the film I did before, which is sort of a sequel to this, my friend Charlie Robinson. We've been talking about another future film for a long time. It is going to be a musical that is based on a Medieval Morality play called 'Everyman'. It is basically where every man wants to meet God. Everybody talks to Death and he ends up going through his life. There's 'true' friendship. Each person lets the character down in a certain way. Charlie actually told me about 'Everyman'. I loved it and I'm starting to build this whole thing around that.

Hopefully Geneva might be involved. There will be a cast of 10 people. I'm hoping to find different musicians that I really like and give them each a cool song.

I've always loved music. I really liked the Pink Floyd movie 'The wall'. An amazing director writes the whole story around the Pink Floyd album. It is so psychedelic but really gets into this drama and abstract. I would watch that every day for several years when I was like 12-13. I loved the way it functioned in the background. I'd like to think about other things and draw. I loved music videos growing up in the 80s. I watched MTV and each music video used to be so artistic and weird. I really love that type of musical abstract storytelling. It is not as literal as the normal drama. A musical to me captures more of what it feels like to be alive and around people. It has that weird energy. I'm hoping to make more stuff like that.

***I browsed the works that you did. They either have the 90s vibe or they are about the future. Why do you film about something abstract and not about the present time?***

I've never liked living in the present.

When I was a little kid I used to spend all my time in libraries. I read all the different books. I loved being able to grab these books from different time periods, from the 60s or the 20s. I loved seeing people of my culture but separated by time. I feel like for me it feels dangerous being in the present because I think it is kind of a river with a lot of force. It is easy to get sucked into this path that everybody else feels. I'd rather look at different times and different countries and see these different perspectives to understand where we are at now. I feel that in a way it's almost like summoning things from a different time, analysing things that were in the 90s or 80s and bringing that forward and pushing back out again versus recycling all the things that were given.



Especially in America, we are bombarded by highly sophisticated cultural techniques. It is designed to get everybody to really not think and feel and go along with everything. I'd rather bring a bubble of something different and hopefully let that grow. I hope that other people could find it sort of refreshing and a break from the world we are currently in.

Image on the left: Chris Friend

***Even the picture in your films is kind of vintage. Maybe, we lose something with the progress of technology. The technology develops, but what about the people? How do we improve or degrade from that?***

I feel like we've lost so many things in different ages. I love looking at old woodcuts and things from the Renaissance. I feel particularly as an artist that their thinking was so much more precise, looking at Roman sculpture. There was such precision and beauty.

Great masters of the Renaissance would spend so much time on these big works and that's why I spent 4 years on my project. I think that sort of shows and brings a different level of stuff.

One of the most dangerous things to me is corporate culture that pushes things to be disposable and junk. It makes everybody think that that's what they're supposed to do.



whole different world. I'd like to do my part to bring that back. It's almost like seeing it as the seeds of culture and bringing that seed in and letting it grow on its own.

***How do you see the future world from the point where we are now? What will we take from the present and what will be left?***

I believe that we exist in one of the most interesting times in all of human history. Looking on the history timeline it is easy to see what a weird time we live in. I think everything will be managed. We will probably look back on these days like on the good ones. It is best for us to appreciate the time we're living in now.

It's interesting actually with Russia. Constantine split the Roman Empire for his sons into two: the Eastern Empire and the Western Empire. The Western Empire fell but the Eastern Empire continued. I feel that the Western Empire spiritually went out to Britain and then went to America. While the Eastern Empire is spiritually kind of gone to Russia. That empire was represented by the double-headed eagle. The one head faced West for the Western Empire and another faced the East. And Caesar was tsar. I think that Russia is the furthest descendant of the Eastern Empire. We're still part of this historical legacy. We have this collective memory that is fractured in a way. We all have these similar roots.

In America we don't really get and understand how we came to be and who these countries are. I think bringing more of that historical knowledge of the world will help us see where we all actually are and how we all are brothers and sisters.

***What do you think about Covid from the historical perspective?***

We are at a point. It is a historical time. I find it funny that Covid is not that dangerous. I mean that it is pretty dangerous but dangerous enough to change society. I think it is going to be a long period during which things gonna be managed. There will be a lot of different steps. I think there are different sides of it too. There are sides that want to destroy all the countries and make us one kind of corporation. And there is the other aspect that people are waking up and they realise that there are a lot of things in their own countries that are important to preserve. We all have different cultures and histories. Sometimes it's only when things get threatened to be taken away. I definitely think there's two forces. As these two forces battle it out we all see things in a different kind of shape. There will be major changes.

These changes remind me of changes after the world wars. Look at all the changes that came after the World War II. It is going to be similar to that. There were a lot of rearrangements. It is a spiritual cultural war. We are all involved in this war of different forces.

I think it is important to all of us to really take a look where we actually stand, where we came from and to think about this moment and be awake. Nobody in history really saw things coming. We only see the endless stories.

We live in a good time to look around us and to keep our thoughts of what is happening. It is kind of a war on our own thoughts. Just like with advertising. It is the super form of advertising where our own minds are the last sort of territory to concur.

***FAVOURITE MUSICIANS***

## **FAVOURITE ARTISTS**

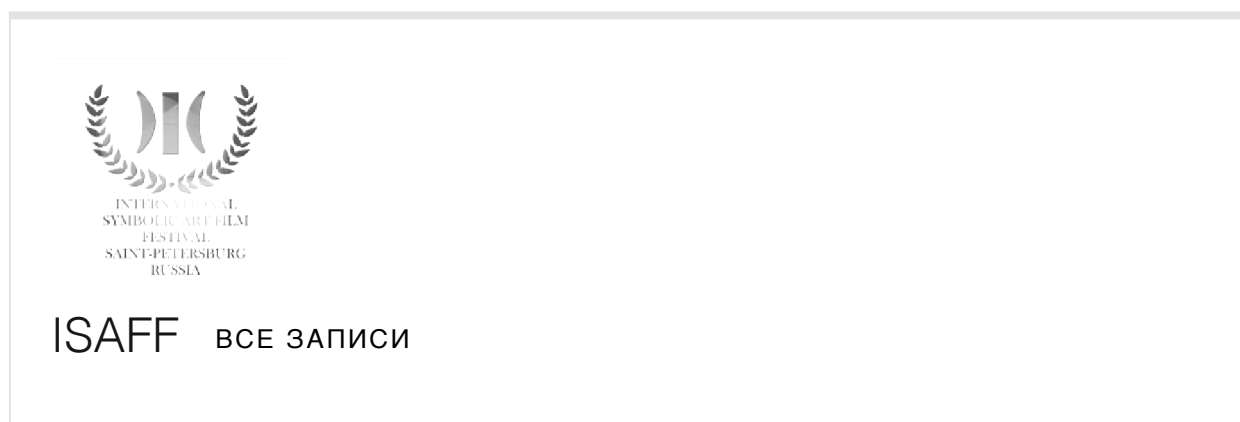
EGON SCHIELE, GUSTAV KLIMT, STANLEY KUBRICK

## **FAVOURITE DIRECTORS**

STANLEY KUBRICK, DAVID LYNCH, GEORGE LUCAS

## **NO RUSSIANS IN THE LIST...**

OH, I'M SORRY! EISENSTEIN!



1 Комментарий [ДОБАВЬТЕ СВОЙ](#)

1

Short Video: Geneva Jacuzzi's Casket, 6min., USA, Music Video –  
Experimental Film & Music Video Festival on 20 мая, 2021 at 21:28

[...] "If cybernetics is the science of control, management is the profession of control" ISAFF, St. Petersburg, Russia

Interview <https://isaffinterview.com/2021/04/02/chrisfriendcasket/> [...]

★ Нравится

Обсуждение закрыто.