

Document Citation

Title	Pida huivista kiinni, Tatjana
Author(s)	Piers Handling
Source	<i>Toronto International Film Festival</i>
Date	1994
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Total balalaika show, Kaurismäki, Aki, 1994 Pidä huivista kiinni, Tatjana (Take care of your scarf, Tatiana), Kaurismäki, Aki, 1994

*Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana*

Pida Huivista Kiinni, Tatjana

Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana

Aki Kaurismäki

FINLAND/GERMANY, 1994

65 minutes ■ Black and White/35mm

Production Company: **Sputnik Oy/
Pandora Film**

Producer: **Aki Kaurismäki**

Screenplay: **Aki Kaurismäki, Sakke
Järvenpää**

Cinematography: **Timo Salminen**

Principal Cast: **Kati Outinen,
Matti Pellonpää, Kirsi Tykkyläinen**

Total Balalaika Show

Aki Kaurismäki

FINLAND, 1993

55 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Sputnik Oy**

Producer: **Aki Kaurismäki**

Cinematography: **Heikki Ortamo**

Principal Cast: **Leningrad Cowboys,
Alexandrov Red Army Chorus and
Dance Ensemble**

Print Source: **Finnish Film Foundation,
Kanavakatu 12, SF-00160 Helsinki,
Finland. Tel: (358-0) 177-727.
Fax: (358-0) 177-937.**

Foreign Sales Agent: **World Sales
Christa Saredi, Ottilienstrasse 19,
8003 Zurich, Switzerland. Tel: (41-1)
463 70 20. Fax: (41-1) 463 71 80.**

This double-bill features the two sides of Kaurismäki's artistic personality. *Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana* is the latest installment in the Finnish director's portrayal of those lost, wayward, underprivileged working-class folk whose forlorn looks and offbeat humour have informed such extraordinary films as *Shadows in Paradise*, *Ariel*, *The Match Factory Girl* and *Bohemian Life*.

Here, the hen-pecked loutish Valto takes off with his greasy-haired mechanic friend Reino, on an aimless rebellious trip, armed with coffee, cigarettes and the ever-present vodka and with no apparent destination in mind. They soon meet up with Tatjana, a stringy, doe-eyed Estonian trying to get home to Tallinn, and Klaudia, a buxom voluptuous Russian. Few words pass between the four-some, as Kaurismäki deadpans his way through a number of priceless situations, yet his actors communicate a wealth of unexpressed emotions, helped immeasurably by the luminous black-and-white photography of Kaurismäki regular Timo Salminen.

Total Balalaika Show, on the other hand, is a rollicking documentary on an outdoor concert given in front of 50,000 fans in Helsinki's main square by the Leningrad Cowboys (and Cowgirls!) and over a hundred singers and musicians from the Red Army Chorus. In this inspired piece of crosscultural pairing, we move from the outrageous antics of the Cowboys to the deeply moving voices of the Red Army Choir. Alternating from one to the other throughout the concert, we cut from the Red Army in full-dress

uniform singing Sibelius's "Finlandia" to a rip-roaring version of "Let's Work Together." Other inspired songs include "Delilah," "Gimme All Your Lovin'" and a fabulous version of Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," all presented on a set featuring fake palm trees, a bust of Lenin and a mock-up of a Soviet tractor housing the Cowboys' drummer. Add some hilarious choreographed numbers and when we wind up with "Those Were the Days," we know we've never seen anything like this before!

■ Piers Handling

Aki Kaurismäki was born in Finland in 1957. He has worked as a film critic, scriptwriter, actor, assistant director, and producer. His recent films include *Leningrad Cowboys Go America* (89), *The Match Factory Girl* (90), *I Hired a Contract Killer* (90), *Bohemian Life* (92), *Total Balalaika Show* (93), *Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses* (94), and *Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana* (94).

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Distribution in Europe for *Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana* supported by EFDO under the EU's Media Programme.