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The will of the people



CHARLES LEWINSKY:
"DER WILLE DES VOLKES".
Nagel & Kimche, 2017.
384 pages, CHF 27.90,
EUR 24.

Kurt Weilemann is a retired old-school journalist for whom professionalism meant in-depth research and a correct use of language. The times have changed and he is now surplus to requirements. One day, Derendinger, a former colleague, asks to meet him. Derendinger seems so confused that Weilemann suspects he might be ill. But when Derendinger is found dead a few hours later, Weilemann quickly realises that it couldn't possibly have been suicide, as is officially claimed. His curiosity is aroused and he is egged on by Eliza, a young friend of the deceased. When he starts researching the case, he stumbles across a potentially explosive

fact. Confronted by the omnipotent apparatus of state power that simply wants to cover up the truth at all costs, Weilemann eventually begins to fear for his own life.

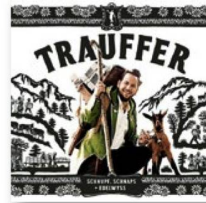
Charles Lewinsky's novel belongs to both the science fiction and crime genres. The action is set in Zurich and in the world of Swiss politics. The country is governed by the populist fictitious Federal Democratic Party, whose seriously ill leader, Stefan Wille, is kept alive by machines in hospital. Nevertheless, Wille's ideology continues to influence the activities at party headquarters, which pulls all the strings. Surveillance cameras and electronic devices keep tabs on everyone, wherever they may be. Public opinion is shaped in a subtle and sophisticated way through political advertising and the media. The resultant popular sentiment provides the party and the state apparatus with a licence to use any means to maintain law and order.

Through the irascible, stubborn, though highly astute Weilemann, the accomplished author has created a character that you simply cannot help but like. The story does not always maintain the suspense of a crime novel. But it is told in a clever, humorous and critical way. The futuristic world of a totalitarian Switzerland envisaged by the author is unnerving and will hopefully never materialise.

Charles Lewinsky, born in 1946, studied German and drama. He worked as a director and editor before making a name for himself as a freelance writer from 1980 onwards. He has written many TV shows, including Swiss television's most successful sitcom series, "Fascht e Familie". He has also produced radio plays, song lyrics, screenplays and theatre plays. His novels have been translated into many languages. Lewinsky spends the winter in Zurich and his summers in Vereux, France.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

The easy-going alpine revolutionary



TRAUFFER:
"SCHNUPF, SCHNAPS +
EDELWYSS".
Ariola/Sony, 2018

It starts with cattle being driven up to alpine pastures – cows stomping, occasional mooing and the sound of bells are heard. Then hymnal yodelling starts up, leaving listeners in no doubt about where Trauffer sees paradise – high up in the mountains of picture-postcard Switzerland. A place where sex, drugs and rock'n'roll have never managed to oust "Schnupf, Schnaps + Edelwys" (snuff, schnapps and edelweiss), which is the title of the new album by the successful Bernese musician.

His fans will forgive the 39-year-old for dismissing rock as "yesterday's snow" in his title track and frequently resorting to its clichés in over half of his new songs. In "Dä mit de Chüe" he combines electric guitar with accordion to create a jangling stomping groove just as the Austrian alpine rocker Hubert von Goisern did with aplomb in the late 1980s. But Trauffer does not stop there. A Blues Brothers horn section, an alphorn and a dulcimer also feature on the same track. And, unsurprisingly, yodelling is continually heard on the singer's sixth album.

Marc Trauffer – the full name of the Brienz-born performer – can certainly not be accused of wasting his life. He had some big hits with his previous band Airbäg and has been setting records as a solo artist at least since "Alpentainer". That album spent a total of three years in the Swiss Top 50 from 2014 and the follow-up "Heiterefahne", released in 2016, topped the chart for seven weeks. It is only hit singles that have eluded Trauffer so far, and even his latest one "Geissepeter" only made it to number eight last December.

As well as catchy barn-dance rock, "Schnupf, Schnaps + Edelwys" also includes a few ballads and some ski-hut reggae. There is no real edginess though, including lyrically. Trauffer does not want to detract from his broad appeal in any part of the country, which is why he diplomatically enjoys his sausage with or without mustard in "Bier & Cervalat". More impressive is the limerick song "Obsi oder Nizi" in which he cracks jokes like comedian Peach Weber all the way through. One thing is for sure, Trauffer's star is still rising.

STEFAN STRITTMATTER