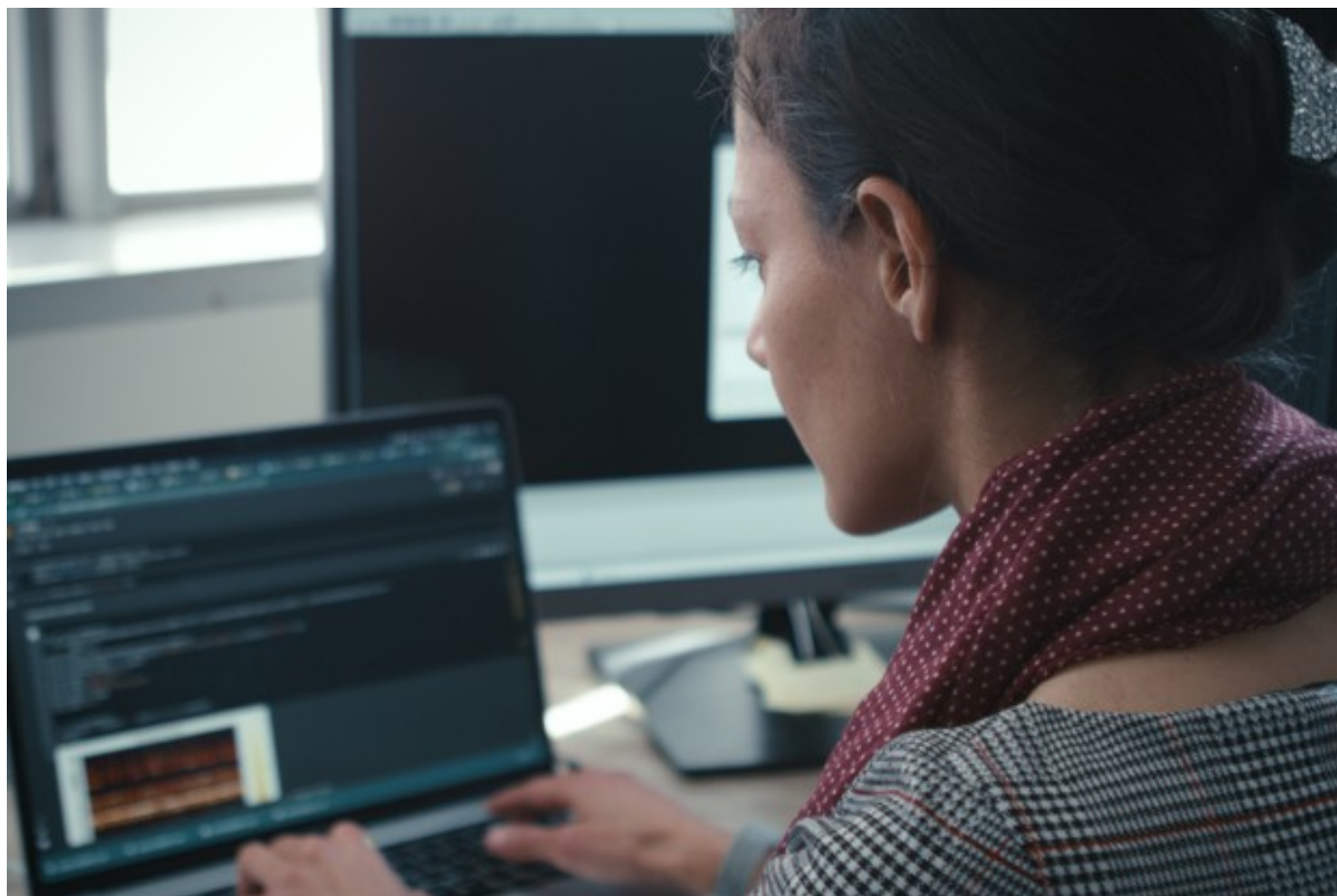


SXSW 2024

Review: *How to Build a Truth Engine*

by [MARTIN KUDLÁČ](#)

13/03/2024 - Friedrich Moser's documentary, executive-produced by George Clooney, examines various technological, social and neurological aspects in the age of disinformation



Austrian documentarian **Friedrich Moser** (*A Good American* [+], *Money Bots*) delves into the intricate dynamics of technology, society and politics in his latest work, *How to Build a Truth Engine*, screening at [SXSW](#). Over the past five years, there has been a stark acceleration in the spread of disinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories, which have now infiltrated mainstream discourse. Moser's documentary, a result of his multifaceted role as a writer, producer, director and cinematographer, embarks on a globe-trotting journey to engage with award-winning journalists from esteemed institutions, including *The New York Times* and the ICIJ (International Consortium for Investigative Journalism), as well as scientists from top-tier universities from a variety of fields, such as neuroscience and folklore. Together, they explore, and eventually identify, the mechanisms, algorithms and cognitive vulnerabilities that have facilitated the widespread dissemination of

distorted narratives that pose a challenge to truth and democracy, and which are already having dire ramifications.

COVID-19 and the Russo-Ukrainian War have served as pivotal backdrops for the proliferation of misinformation, both forming the core of Moser's investigative journey in the documentary. The director collaborates with journalists from established media outlets, delving into their meticulous efforts to analyse war-related found footage and satellite imagery from Ukraine, aimed at identifying the perpetrators of the Bucha massacre. The documentary also ventures into exploring the origins of the COVID-19 virus and the QAnon conspiracy theory as illustrative case studies on altered narratives leveraged for influence. These instances demonstrate how misinformation can fuel radicalisation, with QAnon's influence notably contributing to the 6 January insurrection in the USA.

How to Build a Truth Engine is thus another addition to the burgeoning genre of documentaries that scrutinise the impact of the digital age on our geopolitical landscape. By broadening its narrative scope and adding contextual depth, Moser's work is positioned alongside other critical examinations of our online reality, such as *Feel Good Man*, which explores the alt-right movement, and *Another Body*, which addresses the exploitation associated with deepfake technology.

Moser's documentary aligns with themes prevalent in non-fiction literature – works such as **Naomi Klein's** *Doppelganger*, which combines memoir and political analysis to dissect misinformation and conspiracy theories; **Sander van der Linden's** *Foolproof*; and *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread* by **Cailin O'Connor** and **James Owen Weatherall**. However, while Moser acknowledges the well-documented role of unregulated social-media networks in overshadowing mainstream and legacy media, his picture also highlights the growing appetite for alternative facts. Through engaging interviews with experts such as **Tim Tangherlini** and **Vwani Roychowdhury**, among others, *How to Build a Truth Engine* broadens the discourse. The doc delves into the human dimension, exploring how our brains process and can be manipulated by information. This approach underscores the documentary's focus on the complex interplay between technology, society and the individual in the age of misinformation, within the interconnected world.

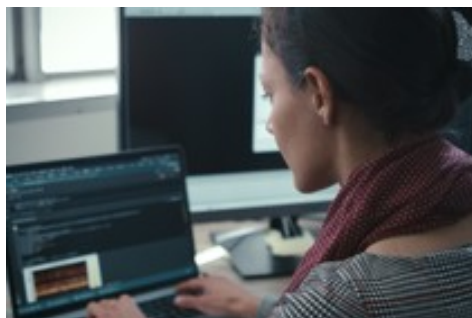
How to Build a Truth Engine emerges as a pertinent documentary that tackles the obstacles confronting journalism and society within the disinformation era. The emphasis on journalism as a central theme sets Moser's work apart from other documentaries and books addressing similar topics. By weaving together personal narratives, in-depth investigative journalism and an examination of technology, the director and his team elucidate the intricate inner workings of misinformation, the volatile nature of information ecosystems and the continuous battle against deceptive narratives.

Despite the film's mapping of the labour-intensive process of fact-checking and the exhaustive investigation required to debunk a single false narrative – while countless other fabrications emerge simultaneously – Moser's film noticeably skirts a critical issue: the current crisis within journalism itself. The documentary does not fully engage with the challenges of maintaining investigative journalism amid widespread media closures, layoffs, furloughs, salary reductions and the shuttering of editorial offices across the globe. Consequently, *How to Build a Truth Engine* leans more towards a technological perspective on the issue, somewhat overshadowing the journalism crisis in this big-screen documentary spectacle homing in on the pitfalls of the digital era.

How to Build a Truth Engine was produced by Austria's [Friedrich Moser Film GmbH](#) in association with Social Impact Entertainment Films (USA), and **George Clooney** and **Grant Heslov's** Smokehouse Pictures (USA).

[more about: How To Build A Truth Engine](#)

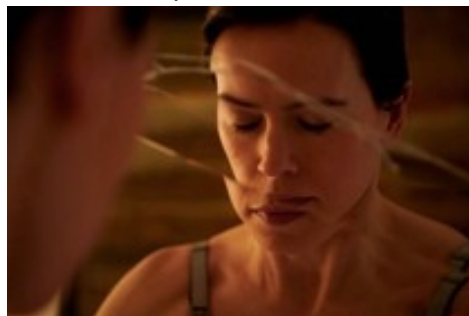
[related news](#)



Review: *How to Build a Truth Engine*

Friedrich Moser's documentary, executive-produced by George Clooney, examines various technological, social and neurological aspects in the age of disinformation ▶

13/03/2024 | SXSW 2024



British, German, French and Spanish films lead the European surge at SXSW

Cinema from the continent has a commanding presence across the US festival's line-up, spanning fiction, documentary, XR and genre works ▶

28/02/2024 | SXSW 2024

14/03/2024
Malaga 2024

Review: *Jumping the Fence*

14/03/2024
Bergamo 2024

Review: *Good Guys Go To Heaven*

13/03/2024
Films / Reviews –
Italy/France/UK

Review: *Race For Glory - Audi vs. Lancia*

13/03/2024
Thessaloniki Documentary
2024

Review: *Warm Film*

13/03/2024
Thessaloniki Documentary
2024

Review: *Unclickable*

12/03/2024
SXSW 2024

Review: *Mamífera*

all news

