

THE TRUE STORY  
ABOUT A SWEDISH FILMMAKER  
AND A BANANA CORPORATION.  
DIRTY TRICKS, LAWSUITS, MANIPULATION,  
AND THE PRICE OF FREE SPEECH.

A FILM BY FREDRIK GERTTEN

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*



STORY BY FREDRIK GERTTEN, MARGARETE JÄNGÅRD, BARB SIMPSON, DAVID MARCAEL, DAN KOEPEL, KEN SILVERSTEIN,  
LINCOLN BANDLOW, STEVE RENSHALL, TIM BURZ, AND SWEN HUGHES. PRODUCED BY WG FILM. IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH SVT AND  
FILM I SKÅNE. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARGARETE JÄNGÅRD, LITTHA JESPER OSMUND, BENJAMIN BENDERUP, MARGARETE JÄNGÅRD, NIELS  
PAGH ANDERSEN. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CONNY MALMQUIST, DAN "GISEN" MALMQUIST. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALEXANDER THÖRNQVIST, PERET FREY,  
NICOLA PROSPERINI, EMMA SVENSSON. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICHAEL CAVARACH, DANIELA KATON, REBECA MENDEZ. WITH SUPPORT FROM THE SWEDISH  
FILM INSTITUTE, FILM FUNDING BODY ECCELEA, LUDIA AND SUZANNE GLANSBERG, IN ASSOCIATION WITH TVE, VPRO AND AGAINST  
GRAVITY, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION.



[WWW.BIGBOYSGONEBANANAS.COM](http://WWW.BIGBOYSGONEBANANAS.COM)

WG FILM



# **BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\***

**THE TRUE STORY ABOUT A SWEDISH FILMMAKER, A BANANA CORPORATION'S DIRTY TRICKS, MEDIA MANIPULATION, LAWSUITS AND THE PRICE OF FREE SPEECH.**

## **Synopsis**

What is a big corporation capable of doing in order to protect its brand?

Recently, Swedish documentary filmmaker Fredrik Gertten experienced this personally. His previous film *BANANAS!\** recounts the lawsuit that 12 Nicaraguan plantation workers successfully brought against the fruit giant Dole Food Company. That film was selected for competition by the 2009 Los Angeles Film Festival. Nothing wrong so far, right? But then just before leaving Sweden to attend the Los Angeles world premiere of his film, Gertten gets a strange message: the festival has decided to remove *BANANAS!\** from competition. Then, a scathing, controversial and misinformed article appears on the cover of the Los Angeles Business Journal about the film a week before the premiere. And subsequently, Gertten receives a letter from Dole's attorneys threatening legal action if the film is shown at this festival and to cease and desist.

What follows is an unparalleled story that Gertten captured on film. He filmed this entire process of corporate bullying and media spin - from DOLE attacking the producers with a defamation lawsuit, utilizing scare tactics, to media-control and PR-spin. *BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\** can be seen as a thriller and a cautionary tale. But, mostly this is a personal story about what happened to Gertten, as a documentary filmmaker and to his company and how the livelihood of documentary filmmakers can be easily put into jeopardy.

This powerful film reveals precisely how a multinational will stop at nothing to get its way - freedom of speech is at stake. As Dole's public relations company puts it, "It is easier to cope with a bad conscience than a bad reputation".

# **BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\***

## **Directors Statement**

BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\* was a film I needed to make. Being sued by a multi-national corporate giant like Dole Foods is no PR-stunt and is no fun. But it is interesting! You learn a lot, and if you survive you certainly have a story to tell.

I have worked as a journalist and filmmaker for 25 years now. And the experience of being the subject of an attack from a major corporation such as this, gave me a deeper understanding of society and media.

In BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\* I am trying to understand how Dole Foods did what they did. The questions kept coming: Why were they so successful in the US in controlling the story in the media and blocking the film for almost two years?

In addition, the film is also about corporate scare tactics and instilling fear in the little guys. How do people react when they can feel the raw forces of money and power coming against a filmmaker? In my situation, some people moved away for us and left us alone to fight this battle. Perhaps they believed Dole had a point, or maybe it was just a battle they could not afford to take on. But we were fortunate that there were those who showed passion and solidarity with us. For example, each of the European broadcasters involved in showing BANANAS!\* decided to broadcast the film regardless of the fact that we had a lawsuit pending in the US. That was a good feeling. And, in Sweden consumers and activists pushed the supermarkets to boycott Dole Foods. The boycott actually did not happen. But, instead the supermarkets demanded Dole to withdraw the lawsuit.

Today, independent documentary films are more important than ever. These films are the last bastions of truth telling. Traditional media outlets have less money for investigative reporting and many are owned by corporate entities that have an influence on the news and its presentation and distribution. All of which means that documentary filmmakers have an even harder job to seek the truth and will continue to meet more opposition, as we continue to tell these stories of corporations doing bad things. There is no doubt that what we experienced in making BANANAS!\* and what is documented in this current film BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\* will not stop.

I hope that BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\* will open up a debate on what and how the powerful corporations do and are able to do by way of controlling the media and instilling fear amongst the little people. Going through this experience always made me wonder: How free is freedom of speech and how free is freedom of press.

We need to keep making our films and telling these stories.

Fredrik Gertten  
Malmö, Sweden

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*

## Background

BANANAS!\* was one of the most talked about documentary films of 2009. The interest from media and the support from audiences and fellow filmmakers has been overwhelming. Below is a brief outline of the events during the hectic months before and after the film's premiere.

**(Spoiler alert - You might want to watch the film before reading all this...)**



In **April 2009**, BANANAS!\* was selected to compete in the Los Angeles Film Festival to be held in June.

**On May 8th**, a hearing about the fraud case featured in BANANAS!\*, was held in Los Angeles Superior Court. BANANAS!\* was the subject of a discussion between Judge Victoria Chaney and Dole attorney Andrea Neuman, and the trailer for the film was showed in the court room. In regard to the film, Judge Chaney stated to those present: "Just so we are clear, I am not in any way going to make, and I will not consider, any request for prior restraint on free speech. Okay? So, don't ask me to go try and contact the film company. I don't have jurisdiction over them. But even if I did, don't ask me for it." After the hearing, Dole's law firm, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, sent a letter to WG Film, ITVS and all of the sponsors of the Los Angeles Film Festival. Dole did not like the trailer, nor the promo material featured on the website.

Neither Dole nor their attorneys had seen the completed film – they had only seen the trailer. "Strange things happens in LA. Mighty forces showing arms", Gertten twittered. Five days later, WG Film's U.S. lawyer, Richard J. Lee, wrote in response to Dole's letter: "The film is a balanced

documentary of a trial based on actual events. Most of the factual information contained in the film is stated by its subjects, not by the filmmaker, who is essentially acting as a reporter.

**On May 14th** Dole's lawyers sent a second "cease and desist" letter, still trying to shut down a film they had not seen. We responded by offering tickets to the LA premiere on June 20th.

**On June 5th**, based on threats from Dole of possible legal action against the festival, the Los Angeles Film Festival moved BANANAS!\* out of competition. Instead, a "special case study screening" was arranged, with a post-screening discussion with Gertten.

**On June 8th**, the Los Angeles Business Journal published a story about BANANAS!\* entitled "The Big Slip-Up" with the sub headline "Documentary on lawyer needs fact-check." The Los Angeles Business Journal, however, clearly did not conduct any fact-checking on its own article, let alone the film, because nobody at the Los Angeles Business Journal had seen the film. Following the article, Gertten stated in a press release: "In answer to the question of whether my film is fraudulent, I cannot see that it is. Everything I filmed is the truth and how this all played out during this trial. The most important evidence in the case is a letter between Standard Fruit Company (now Dole) and Dow Chemicals. This is hard evidence and was not something that I made up."

**On June 8th**, a news team from Swedish National Television (SVT) interviewed Fredrik Gertten. Shortly after the story was broadcast, the reporter was contacted by Dole's PR firm, Gibraltar Associates in Washington D.C. Three days later, another interview was made by the same team, now with the focus on the fraud accusations, including a telephone interview with Michael Carter, Dole's Executive Vice President. The story was broadcast on prime time national SVT news.

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*

**June 20th – premiere day.** Just hours before the screening, the Film Independent board held an internal screening, and discussed what to do. They decided to proceed, and BANANAS!\* was screened at the UCLA James Bridges Theatre. In the last minute, however, BANANAS!\* was pulled out from the Audience Award. Festival volunteers even had to re-collect the voting ballots from the sitting audience.

**On July 7th,** Dole filed a civil lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court against WG Film, director Gertten and producer Margarete Jangård over the LA screenings of BANANAS!\*. The lawsuit claims that the film defames Dole.

**On October 1,** BANANAS!\* was screened in a fully booked meeting room in the Swedish parliament. After the screening, MPs Mats Johansson and Luciano Astudillo launched a cross-party petition, collecting names in the Parliament. In the petition they are asking Dole to withdraw their lawsuit. The will to defend free speech was overwhelming from politicians from left to right, and the story got widely spread in Swedish media.

**On October 9,** BANANAS!\* had its Swedish premiere. Over 20 cinemas all over Sweden screened the film simultaneously. After the screening, Fredrik Gertten was interviewed by Orvar Säfström at Spegeln Cinema in Malmö. The interview was broadcasted live, and audiences all over Sweden could send questions via SMS. Over 400 questions were received. A recording of this Q&A will be included on the BANANAS!\* DVD, with planned release in December, 2009. The same morning, reviews were published in all major Swedish newspapers. Dagens Nyheter, Sydsvenskan, Aftonbladet and Expressen all gave it 4 out of 5 stars.

**On October 15,** BANANAS!\* was once again discussed in the Swedish parliament, this time on government level. The Swedish minister of culture, Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth, met with Fredrik Gertten, free speech lawyer Percy Bratt and MPs Mats Johansson and Luciano Astudillo to get a deeper insight into the

matter. The same day, Dole withdrew their lawsuit. In a press release, Dole said they had made their decision in light of the free speech concerns being expressed in Sweden, although they continues to believe in the merits of its case.

**On October 29,** director Fredrik Gertten, producer Margarete Jangård and WG Film withdrew their counterclaim against Dole. However, they asked the court to compel Dole to pay the fees and costs incurred to defend the lawsuit.

**On October 22,** the final anti-SLAPP hearing was held after a long series of postponed dates. The hearing was a success for Fredrik Gertten, Margarete Jangård and WG Film, but the written ruling was not released until one month later. Download the anti-SLAPP hearing transcript.



**On November 17,** the written ruling was finally released. The Los Angeles Superior Court granted the anti-SLAPP motion filed by Fredrik Gertten, Margarete Jangård and WG Film, and struck the defamation complaint filed by Dole. The Court found that a "careful review of the film did not support Dole's assertions" in the complaint. In addition to striking the lawsuit with prejudice, the Court ordered Dole to pay attorneys fees and costs in the amount of \$200,000.

**Read the full story on [bananasthemovie.com](http://bananasthemovie.com)**

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*

## The creative team



### **Fredrik Gertten, director**

Fredrik Gertten is an award winning director and journalist based in Malmö, Sweden.

In 1994 he founded the production company WG Film. Before he worked as a foreign correspondent and columnist for radio, TV and press in Africa, Latin America, Asia and around Europe. Today he combines film making with a role as a creative producer on WG Film - famous for local stories with a global understanding, with several films catching the identity and transformation of his hometown. Featuring international stars like footballer *Zlatan Ibrahimovic* and architect *Santiago Calatrava*, among others. Dole Food company made his film *BANANAS!\** controversial by suing the company, producer and director. The fight for the film and freedom of speech won international recognition. In Sweden awarded with several prizes including the *Anna Politkovskaya freedom of speech award*.

### **Margarete Jangård, producer**

Margarete Jangård is a producer with her main focus on creative documentaries. After seven years on WG Film she stands behind films such as *BANANAS!\**, *Love Always*, *Carolyn, I bought a rainforest*, *Milkbar*, *The socialist*, *the Architect* and *the Twisted Tower* and more. She has a background in commercials and advertising which she worked with for almost 20 years. Now supplemented by several years of international networking around Europe, USA and Canada.

### **Jesper Osmund, editor**

Jesper Osmund has worked as a film editor since 1991. He has edited over 45 feature length documentaries, 6 feature films, a couple of short films and miniseries for TV and more than 600 commercials. Lately he combines his editing with holding lectures in dramaturgy and teaches at work-shops all over Europe together with EDN - European Documentary Network. On WG Film he is the editor behind famous productions such as *BANANAS!\** and *An Ordinary Family*.

### **Benjamin Binderup, editor**

Benjamin Binderup graduated in 2005 from The National Film and Television School in London. Has worked as a professional film editor since 2002, mostly with commercial films and music videos. After his education Benjamin made his way into fiction, and has worked on several fiction films such as the award-winning *Manden med de Gylde ører* and DR TV2 thriller series *Den som dræber*.

### **Niels Pagh Andersen, narrative consultant**

Niels Pagh Andersen started his career as an assistant for two of Denmark's most important editors, Christian Hartkopp and Janus Billeskov Jansen. Since 1979 he has worked as a freelance film editor and has cut more than 250 films of widely different categories. Some examples of his award-winning work are: *Welcome to Denmark*, *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia*, *Everlasting Moments* and others.

# **BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\***

## **Credits**

DIRECTOR: Fredrik Gertten  
EDITOR: Jesper Osmund, Benjamin Binderup  
NARRATIVE CONSULTANT: Niels Pagh Andersen  
COMPOSER: Conny Malmqvist, Dan "Gisen" Malmquist  
SOUND DESIGN: Alexander Thörnqvist  
PRODUCER: Margarete Jangård

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Fredrik Gertten  
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Lina Bertilsson

LINE PRODUCER (LA): Jade Fox

PARTICIPANTS:

Alex Rivera, Alfonso Allende, Arvid Junjaks, Bart Simpson, Bernt Hermele, Charlotte Lundgren, Dan Koeppel, David Magdael, Dawn Hudson, Fredrik Gertten, Jesper Osmund, Juan Domínguez, Ken Silverstein, Lars Åström, Lincoln Bandlow, Luciano Astudillo, Margarete Jangård, Mats Johansson, Michael Carter, Mikael Wiehe, Orvar Säfström, Peter Jäger, Richard Bergfors, Richard J. Lee, Steven Rendall, Sven Hughes, Timothy Burt

CAMERA:

Frank Pineda, Gabriel Noguez, Jason Wawro, Joakim Demmer, Joseph Aguirre, Kiki Allgeier, Malin Korkeasalo, Sasha Snow, Stefan Berg, Anna Sivertsson, Basia Winograd, Christian Sparkes, Desh Ferando, Devin Doyle, Doug Gritzmacher, Einar Árnason, Emma Svensson, Terese Mörnvik, Tobias Lilja, Tomas Kurkinas, Tomas Ramanauskas

CAMERA PREP: Jeremiah Pitman, Zachary Heinzerling  
SOUND: Bart Simpson, Ebbe Gertten, Emma Svensson

POST PRODUCER: Emma Svensson  
COLOR GRADING ARTIST: Michael Cavanagh  
MOTION GRAPHICS: Charlotte Rodenstedt  
BRAND IDENTITY: Rebeca Mendez  
POSTER DESIGN: Per Cromwell

OUTREACH CONSULTANT: Ben Kempas  
ACCOUNTANT: Björn Ringdahl  
LAWERS: Lincoln Bandlow, Richard J. Lee, Mikael Karlsson  
ARCHIVE RESEARCH: Elizabeth Klinck

SUBTITLES: Ingrid Eng, Thomas Löwhagen

TRAILER EDITOR: Jesper Osmund

TRAILER SOUND DESIGN: Nils Olsson

OTHER TEAM:

Agnes Gertten, David McGuire, Javier Briones, Jessica Fisher

ARCHIVE:

CTV, DN.tv, Folkets Hus & Parker, Maximo.tv, Port Everglades Webcam – Port Fever, Sveriges Radio, Sveriges Television, TV4

# **BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\***

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BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\* IS PRODUCED BY WG FILM

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH  
SVT, HJALMAR PALMGREN,  
FILM I SKÅNE, JOAKIM STRAND

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
YLE, JENNY WESTERGÅRD,  
VPRO, NATHALIE WINDHORST  
AGAINST GRAVITY, ARTUR LIEBHART

WITH THE SUPPORT FROM  
THE SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE  
- FILM COMMISSIONER CECILIA LIDIN & SUZANNE GLANSBORG

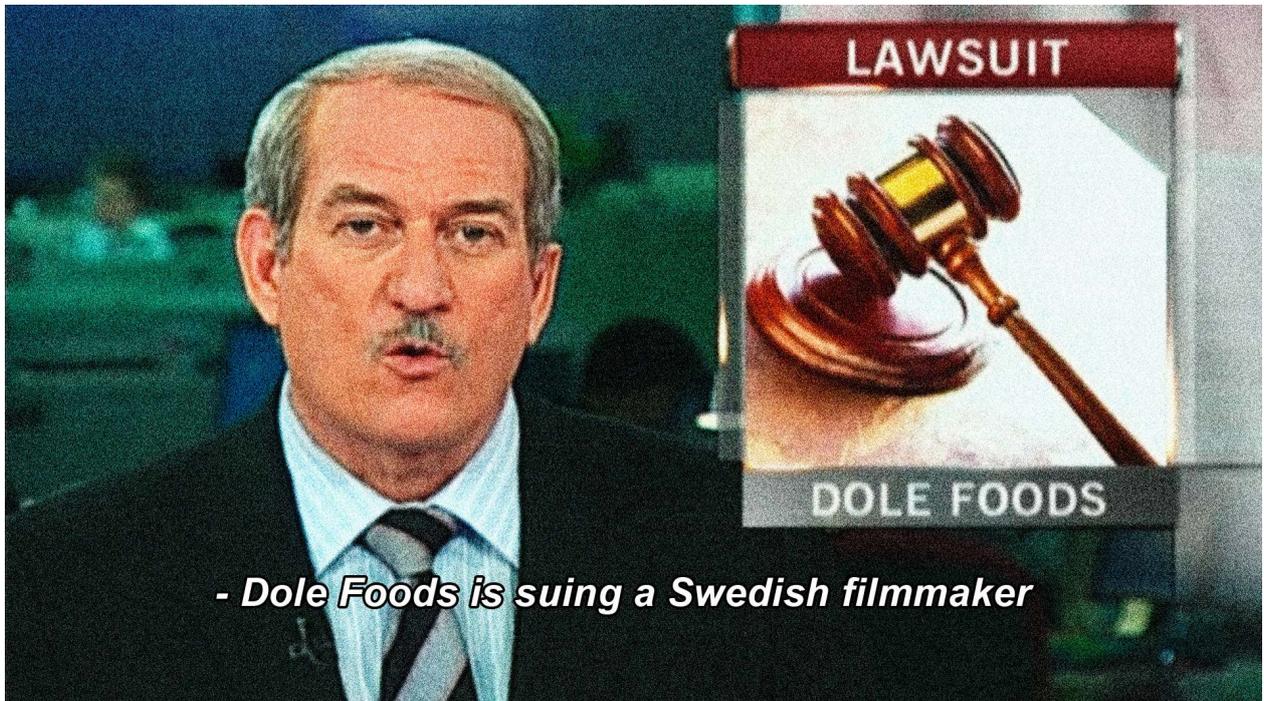
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# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*

Images (more on [www.bigboysgonebananas.com](http://www.bigboysgonebananas.com))



BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*. Photo: Anna Sivertsson



CTV Morning Show July 9, 2009. Photo: CTV

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*



*The final version of the disclaimer defending Doles view of the film, presented to us just before the world premiere of BANANAS!\* at the Los Angeles Film Festival 2009. (From left) Bart Simpson, Canadian co-producer, David Magdael publicist, Peter Jäger sales agent, Winston Emano publicist, Fredrik Gertten director. Photo: Jason Wawro*



*Lawyer Lincoln Bandlow shows the shelf of material it takes to defend the film  
(From left) Fredrik Gertten, Lincoln Bandlow. Photo: Joseph Aguirre*

# BIG BOYS GONE BANANAS!\*

## Info/Contact

Trailer, texts and images are online at [www.bigboysgonebananas.com](http://www.bigboysgonebananas.com). All images are free to use if source (WG Film) and photographer is mentioned.

Please use our [contact form](#) located on the page "*What do you think?*" for all inquiries regarding the film. Sending to our company email address doesn't guarantee an immediate response. Thank you.

## Press enquiries (U.S. & international):

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