# Untold: The Liver King reveals the dark truth behind a viral fitness influencer



Netflix’s latest documentary, *Untold: The Liver King*, plunges into the bizarre world of Brian Johnson, a fitness influencer known for promoting an extreme lifestyle dubbed "ancestral living." The film presents an unsettling yet humorous portrayal of a man who has forged an empire around protein obsession and hyper-masculinity, selling a vision of life that seems to combine the absurdity of *Tiger King* with an earnest portrayal of modern toxic masculinity.

Johnson's brand is built on audacious claims, epitomised by his famously outrageous diet. He promotes a carnivorous regimen that includes consuming raw animal organs, and infamously, a considerable quantity of animal genitals. The opening sequences of the documentary reveal not only the spectacle but also the calculated marketing strategies behind his image. Johnson collaborates with a marketing agency to produce high-octane stunt videos designed to draw in a significant audience, showcasing feats such as pulling a truck while shouting primal affirmations. Such antics have made him an unsettling figure, embodying a parody of the hyper-masculine movement whilst appealing to a generation fascinated by extremes.

However, the documentary takes a sharp turn, revealing that Johnson's famously ripped physique is not solely the result of his controversial lifestyle but rather enhanced by a regimen of anabolic steroids, costing him over $11,000 monthly. This revelation underscores the hollowness behind his claims of "natural" fitness, raising questions about the authenticity of influencers who promote unrealistic standards of wellness and masculinity. The perspective shifts as Johnson himself admits to a lifetime steeped in deception, with the filmmakers illuminating the absurdity of his statement, “Why eat vegetables when you can eat testicles?”

The film’s exploration of Johnson’s parenting offers a poignant contrast to its comedic highs. His relationships with his academically disinterested sons, who bear names like Rad “Ical” Johnson and Stryker “the Barbarian” Johnson, provide a heart-wrenching perspective on how toxic ideals of masculinity can be transmitted to the next generation. The documentary reveals troubling moments, including when Johnson instructs his sons to dissect a dying bull to eat its still-pumping organs. Such scenes elicit a mix of shock and laughter, illustrating the extremes Johnson goes to in order to instil his beliefs about masculinity in his children.

In a startling revelation, it comes to light that child protection services routinely check in on his family, although Johnson positively spins these visits, stating that the caseworker finds his children “awesome.” This denial of the precarious balance between nurture and the harshness of their upbringing adds an unsettling layer to the proceedings, prompting viewers to reflect on the real implications of what it means to embody the caricature of an "alpha male."

*Untold: The Liver King*, directed by Joe Pearlman, succinctly crafts its narrative in just 70 minutes, making it a riveting, albeit slightly disconcerting, watch. Critics have noted its deft blend of humour and critical analysis, drawing comparisons not only to *Tiger King* but also to the mockumentary stylings of *Spinal Tap*. The directorial vision directs the audience’s gaze towards the absurdities of influencer culture while inviting deeper reflection on societal values.

As the film draws to a close, Johnson emerges not defeated but transformed, confidently asserting that his reign as the Liver King is merely beginning. He announces plans for a network of retreats aimed at his followers—an expansion that suggests he may well continue to capitalise on the very persona that the documentary critiques. As he declares, “We’re gonna have 302 of ’em,” one is left questioning not only the future of his empire but also what this says about our collective fascination with such figures.

In a time when societal values are often reflected in the bizarre behaviours of social media influencers, *Untold: The Liver King* serves as both a critique and a mirror, encouraging viewers to consider the stories we buy into and the authenticity behind the personas we idolise.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/untold-the-liver-king-this-hilarious-expose-of-a-fitness-influencer-is-like-tiger-king), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/untold-the-liver-king-this-hilarious-expose-of-a-fitness-influencer-is-like-tiger-king)
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* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/untold-the-liver-king-this-hilarious-expose-of-a-fitness-influencer-is-like-tiger-king), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/untold-the-liver-king-this-hilarious-expose-of-a-fitness-influencer-is-like-tiger-king), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/may/10/untold-the-liver-king-this-hilarious-expose-of-a-fitness-influencer-is-like-tiger-king)
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