



UNDER THE SUN

A film by Vitaly Mansky

North American Premiere: SXSW Film Festival 2016

North American Theatrical Premiere: July 6, 2016

Los Angeles Theatrical Premiere: July 15, 2016

"A fascinating study in state propaganda and the darker truth that hovers just outside the frame"

—*The Hollywood Reporter*

An Icarus Films Release



SYNOPSIS

"My father says that Korea is the most beautiful country... Korea is the land of the rising sun," says eight-year-old schoolgirl Zin-mi. Despite continuous interference by government handlers, director Vitaly Mansky still managed to document life in Pyongyang, North Korea in this fascinating portrait of one girl and her parents in the year as she prepares to join the Korean Children's Union on the 'Day Of The Shining Star' (Kim Jong-Il's birthday). As the family receives instruction on how to be the ideal patriots, Mansky's watchful camera capture details from comrades struggling to stay awake during an official event to Zin-mi's tears at a particularly grueling dance lesson.

SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS

2016 SXSW Film Festival

2016 Hot Docs Film Festival

2016 San Francisco International Film Festival

2016 Seattle International Film Festival

2016 DOXA Documentary Film Festival

2016 AFI Docs Film Festival

Winner - Best Director, 2015 Black Nights International Film Festival Tallinn

Winner - Best Documentary, 2015 Jihlava Documentary Film Festival

2015 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA)

2015 DOKLeipzig Documentary Film Festival

2016 Docpoint Helsinki Documentary Film Festival

IN THE PRESS

THE *Hollywood* **REPORTER**

Film review by Stephen Dalton November 20, 2015

The Bottom Line: Behind the scenes in a sinister real-life remake of 'The Truman Show.'

An officially approved documentary about life inside North Korea finds some revealing cracks in the propaganda image of shiny happy people living in paradise.

A rare glimpse behind the heavy curtain of secrecy and paranoia that shields North Korea from prying foreign cameras, *Under The Sun* is a fascinating study in state propaganda and the darker truth that hovers just outside the frame. After lengthy negotiations with the authorities in Pyongyang, Russian documentary maker Vitaly Mansky agreed to allow his local partners to choose the film's subject matter and locations, as well as scrutinizing and correcting any "mistakes." But their joint project broke down midway through, leaving Mansky with some highly revealing footage about life inside Kim Jong-Un's hermit kingdom.

Screening in competition at Black Nights in Tallinn this week, *Under The Sun* should translate award-winning festival buzz into theatrical potential and keen TV interest. Mansky's long track record of making nuanced, intimate portraits of life inside problematic regimes like Cuba may also help this multinational co-production find a sympathetic audience. But not inside North Korea itself, where it is likely to be about as welcome as a double bill of *The Interview* and *Team America: World Police*.

The focus of the film is Zin-Mi, an angelic eight-year-old schoolgirl who has just joined the Children's Union youth group on the birthday of former leader Kim Jong Il, a nationwide celebration known as The Day of the Shining Star. Zin-Mi attends the best school in Pyongyang, sitting keenly through interminable history lessons about North Korea's glorious victories against Japanese "aggressors" and American "cowards." Her parents both work in exemplary factories that routinely exceed state-imposed production targets. In the evening, all three gather at their gleaming modern apartment to share laughter and patriotic slogans over a dinner table laden with delicious food. A socialist paradise in action.

Except, of course, this is far from the true picture. While he initially seems to go along with this sunny utopian fantasy, Mansky lets reality intrude by degrees. It soon becomes clear that government minders are scripting and staging every scene, dictating each forced smile and clunky line of dialogue. These unnamed stooges intrude on camera, demanding retakes when the cast have not been sufficiently fawning towards North Korea's dynastic Communist Party rulers. The patriotic pageantry at Zin-Mi's school is a choreographed fraud, her parents both have fictional jobs, and even their modestly nice apartment is a fake: "behave naturally, as you do at home," one director tells the family. Both surreal and sinister, it feels like we are watching a real-life version of *The Truman Show*.

There is no such thing as an objective documentary. *Under The Sun* could have fallen into the trap of becoming heavy-handed propaganda itself, but Mansky mostly maintains a humane and non-judgmental distance. Aside from adding a few explanatory captions on screen, he does not editorialize, simply allowing these staged vignettes to tell their own creepy story. He also captures some fascinating reportage images of everyday life inside Pyongyang, with its majestic Moscow-style subway stations, drab apartment blocks and virtually traffic-free boulevards.

Underpinned by a spare chamber-orchestra score, *Under The Sun* is as much melancholy human interest story as political statement. In the film's most beautiful and quietly moving sequence, the camera pans across the faces of North Korean citizens as they pose beneath giant bronze statues of Kim Jong-Il and Kim Il-Sung. Imprisoned in a hellish police state masquerading as heaven on Earth, their smiles are cheerful but their eyes are fearful.



ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



Born 1963 in the Ukraine, filmmaker Vitaly Mansky is one of the most acclaimed contemporary Russian documentary filmmakers and producers. His first work in the world of cinematography appeared in 1989, and since then he has shot more than 30 films which screened at festivals worldwide. Since

1996 Mansky has been working for various TV channels in Russia, popularizing documentary cinema on television. He is the producer of the national award LAVROVAYA VETV (Laurel Branch) for the best Russian documentary films, and president of the annual Moscow Documentary Film Festival ARTDOKFEST. He is still collaborating with various studios and television channels in Russia and abroad as an independent producer. He currently lives in Latvia.

Selected Filmography:

2014	The Book
2013	Pipeline
2011	Motherland or Death
2009	Beginning / Nikolina Gora. Epilogue
2008	Virginity / Dawn / Sunset. Dalai Lama 14
2006	Wild, Wild Beach
2005	Gagarin's Pioneers
2003	Anatomy of t.a.T.u.
2002	Broadway. Black Sea
2001	Gorbachev. After The Empire / Yeltsin. Another Life / Putin. Leap Year
1999	Private Chronicles. Monologue
1995	Bliss
1993	Cuts of a Recurrent War
1991	Lenin's Body
1990-1995	Etudes about Love
1990	Post
1988	Boomerang

FILM CREDITS

Title: *Under the Sun*
A film by: Vitaly Mansky
Theatrical running time: 106 minutes
Language: In Korean with English subtitles
Copyright year: 2015
Release year: 2016
Country: Russia / Latvia / Germany / Czech Republic /
North Korea
Format: HD / 1:1.85 / Dolby 5.1
Produced by: Natalya Manskaya, Simone Baumann,
Filip Remunda
Written by: Vitaly Mansky
Edited by: Andrej Paperny
Photography: Alexandra Ivanova, Mikhail Gorobchuk
Post-production: Julien Melebeck
Music: Karlis Ausans
Production: Vertov.Real Cinema / Vertov in co-production
with Saxonia Entertainment, Hypermarket Film,
MDR and Czech TV
World sales: Deckert Distribution

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More Information

<http://www.icarusfilms.com/new2016/unsun.htm>

Press Room

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