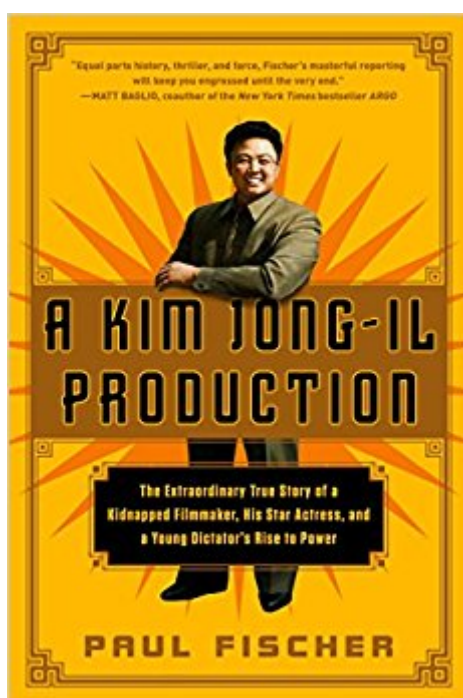


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# A Kim Jong-Il Production: The Extraordinary True Story Of A Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Star Actress, And A Young Dictator's Rise To Power



## Synopsis

An Best of The Year Nonfiction SelectionLibrary Journal Top Ten Book of the Year!The Extraordinary True Story of Kim Jong-Il's kidnapping of the golden couple of South Korean Cinema, The Movies They Were Forced to Make, and Their Daring Escape.Before becoming the world's most notorious dictator, Kim Jong-Il ran North Korea's Ministry for Propaganda and all its film studios. Underwhelmed by the pool of talent available to him he took drastic steps, ordering the kidnap of Choi Eun-Hee (Madame Choi) and her ex-husband Shin Sang-Ok, the country's most famous actress and her ex-husband Shin Sang-Ok, the country's most famous filmmaker. But as Madame Choi and Shin Sang-Ok begin to make North Korea's greatest films, they hatch a plan of escape worthy of a blockbuster Hollywood ending. A Kim Jong-Il Production is that rarest of books: a wildly entertaining, cunningly told story that offers a rare glimpse into a nation still wrapped in mystery. "Gripping" A Kim Jong-Il Production tells the absurd, harrowing, and true story of Choi and Shin's ordeal, which reveals the importance of film as propaganda to the North Korean regime.

Esquire.com "The 1978 abductions of the South Korean actress Choi-Eun-He and her ex-husband, the director Shin Sang-Ok, in Hong Kong is the true crime at the center of Paul Fischer's gripping and surprisingly timely new book.

The New York Times "An entertaining new book details how [Shin and Choi] finally seized their chance to seek asylum A stupefying, novelistic read.

The Boston Globe "Fischer's entertaining narrative paints an arresting portrait of a North Korean "theater state," forced to enact the demented script of a sociopathic tyrant.

Publishers Weekly "Paul Fischer's book A Kim Jong-Il Production is a highly illuminating deep dive on the middle Kim's cinematic obsessions and the film arms race between the two Koreas.

The Washington Post "Exhaustively researched, highly engrossing chronicle of the outrageous abduction of a pair of well-known South Korean filmmakers by the nefarious network of North Korea's Kim Jong-Il.

Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month for February 2015: There was a time when the duo of Shin Sang-Ok and Choi Eun-Hee seemed unassailable. Shin was the extraordinarily successful South Korean movie director and producer; his beautiful wife Choi was his top star and muse, a woman who had elevated herself from a difficult early life to become the envy of men and women alike. From the late 50s until the early 70s, the duo ruled—but divorce, scandal, and diminishing star power brought them back to earth. Little did they know, it was about to get much, much worse. Paul Fischer's A Kim Jong-Il Production is the bizarre and fascinating true story of Shin and Choi's kidnapping by Kim Jong-Il, future Supreme Leader of North Korea (at the time he was son to the then-Supreme Leader). Shin and Choi, who were kidnapped in 1978, went on to make a number of films in North Korea (as the "guest" of Kim Jong-Il) before escaping to the U.S. in 1986. There's a Through the Looking Glass feel to this book, despite it being extremely well-researched and believable, that makes it highly entertaining reading. I had a difficult time putting this book down until I was finished. —Chris Schluep --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The 1978 abductions of the South Korean actress Choi-Eun-hee and her ex-husband, the director Shin Sang-ok, in Hong Kong is the true crime at the center of Paul Fischer's gripping and surprisingly timely new book. —The New York Times "An entertaining new book details how [Shin and Choi] finally seized their chance to seek asylum —A stupefying, novelistic read. —The Boston Globe "Gripping —A Kim Jong-Il Production tells the absurd, harrowing, and true story of Choi and Shin's ordeal, which reveals the importance of film as propaganda to the North Korean regime. —Esquire.com "In his exhaustively researched new book, A Kim Jong-Il Production, Paul Fischer has uncovered a story about a film producer who would make any Sony exec look warm and fuzzy —Details Magazine "Nonfiction

nail-biter. "That a North Korean dictator should kidnap two South Korean movie stars and force them to make films he hoped would rival Hollywood seems the stuff of fantasy. But it isn't, Kim Jong-Il did and Paul Fischer captivantly tells perhaps the most extraordinary tale from the world's most bizarre country. A Kim Jong-Il Production is simply flabbergasting!"

Paul French, author of The New York Times bestseller *Midnight in Peking* "The incredible tale of how a dictator's obsession with the cinema led to one of them most hair-brained schemes ever concocted: to kidnap a famous South Korean director and his star actress and force them to make movies that would inspire his flagging nation. Kim Jong-Il failed to realize, however, that movies--especially good ones--have a power all their own and that real life rarely follows a script. A KIM JONG-IL PRODUCTION is the true story of desperate movie stars, daring escapes, and the paranoid leader who brought it all together. Equal parts history, thriller, and farce, Fischer's masterful reporting will keep you engrossed until the very end."

Matt Baglio, coauthor of The New York Times bestseller *ARGO: How the CIA and Hollywood Pulled off the Most Audacious Rescue in History* "In A Kim Jong-Il Production, Paul Fischer defrosts a Cold War story almost too wild to believe, an epic love story that reveals in Technicolor the North Korean hermit kingdom and its movie-obsessed, improbably charismatic late leader. This book is un-put-downable."

Benjamin Wallace, author of the New York Times bestseller *The Billionaire's Vinegar* "Exhaustively researched, highly engrossing chronicle of the outrageous abduction of a pair of well-known South Korean filmmakers by the nefarious network of North Korea's Kim Jong-Il. Filmmaker Fischer carefully presents a well-documented story of the kidnapping ... A meticulously detailed feat of rare footage inside the DPRK's propaganda machinery."

Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review) "North Korea is a nightmarish movie theater without an exit in this gripping true-life thriller ... Fischer's entertaining narrative paints an arresting portrait of a North Korean "theater state," forced to enact the demented script of a sociopathic tyrant."

Publishers Weekly "Fischer matches keen cinematic analysis with an unusually cogent and vivid brief history of the two postwar Koreas. The most compelling facets of this book of astonishments are Fischer's insights into the relationships between Choi, Sun, and their diabolical captor... Gripping and revelatory, Fischer's true-life thriller provides a portal into the mad tyranny of North Korea."

Booklist (Starred Review) "Paul Fischer's book *A Kim Jong-Il Production* is a highly illuminating deep dive on the middle Kim's cinematic obsessions and the film arms race between the two Koreas."

The Washington Post --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I really enjoyed this book, and had difficulty putting it down. I'm obsessed with the paradox that is the North Korean state, and I've read countless books on the topic, in a wide variety of different settings. This book offers unique insight into the person who is Kim Jong Il. While there is no doubt that Jong Il was a ruthless tyrant, the West would have you believe that he was no more than the type of psychopathic, erratic individual portrayed in the film *Team America*. In reality, he was a calculated individual who meticulously and tirelessly planned everything, and knew exactly what he was doing at all times. Shin and Choi harbor the same sentiment for the Dear Leader, as they had firsthand experience with him over the course of many years, and even grew to respect and even like the charisma and charm Jong Il possessed. This is by far my most favorite book on the topic of North Korea.

Paul Fischer's *A Kim Jong Il Production* presents the rudimentary story of tragic life in the DPRK, however this volume's subjects are two clever kidnapping victims who go on to be creative survivors of the cruel fates orchestrated by Kim Jong-Il. The manner in which Fischer incorporates strategic interviews, facts, historical research, and a touching creative nonfiction narrative creates a vibrant and dynamic voice that makes this book an effective combination of multiple genres encapsulated into one book. The book is a nonfiction narrative that covers both Kim Jong-Il's rise to power and the kidnapping and employment of Choi Eun-Hee and Shin Sang-Ok from South Korea to kickstart the DPRK's new film industry. Through a variety of cloak and dagger operations, the two were able to undermine the authority of Kim and use their influence over the Dear Leader, the country, and various diplomatic and professional connections to their advantage in escaping the brutal kingdom. But the manner in which Fischer combines testimony, narrative, and facts is masterfully woven throughout each paragraph of the book. In *A Kim Jong-Il Production*, Fisher tells a captivating story using a variety of methods that combine research, testimony, and creative nonfiction storytelling. The manner in which his inline references to interviews, historical data, and his own trips to North Korea are interwoven with a creative narrative create a voice that is both authoritative and engaging to the audience. This innovative approach to storytelling melds a traditional narrative methodology with fact in an engaging manner, and that in turn bridges the popular with the academic and widens the potential market for the text as well as the awareness of the readers who pick it up.

I loved this book for all the details of life in certain DPRK circles. I have been fascinated with North Korea for years, contemplating how one raises their children, unable to impart their own

independent views and Ways of Being. It makes me so sad. Great book.

This is a great companion to the book Nothing to Envy. The kidnapping of a film director and top film starlet is unbelievable. Their story is exciting. If you want to gain insight on the current North Korean regime, read this book. This puts in perspective the recent of Kim Jong Nam by his step brother and leader Kim Jong Un. Makes me even more proud of my Dad who fought against the North Koreans in the Korean War.

I'm just starting to get into history and was recommended this by Clay Travis. Phenomenal read. Keeps you engaged and thoughtfully steps you through what happened all-the-while providing you with valuable details about not only the people involved, but the history of Korea and other countries. Highly recommend!

A great story, which I had never heard, with surprising detail about life in the iron rice bowl. The unknown story of abductions of countless people, forced to work in North Korea against their will. And a fascinating tale about the life of one of the most brutal dictators of our century.

Truly a jaw dropping story ! I have read a number of books on North Korea as I am fascinated by this hermit country. Though I don't claim to be an expert on North Korea I think I have a reasonably good understanding of this society from a layman's point of view. Having said that this book delivers a glimpse that I've not seen before in other books on North Korea. One point in particular is when Kim Jong Il seemingly with his guard down speaks frankly about the state of his country and his real world view beyond the borders of North Korea. It's nothing short of astounding. I spent a few nights staying awake later then usual totally absorbed in this book.

A decent read and timely to say the least. I am not sure I would recommend it to someone who does not like to read between the lines. If this is truly nonfiction, then we do have a lot to worry about with the North Korean regime.

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