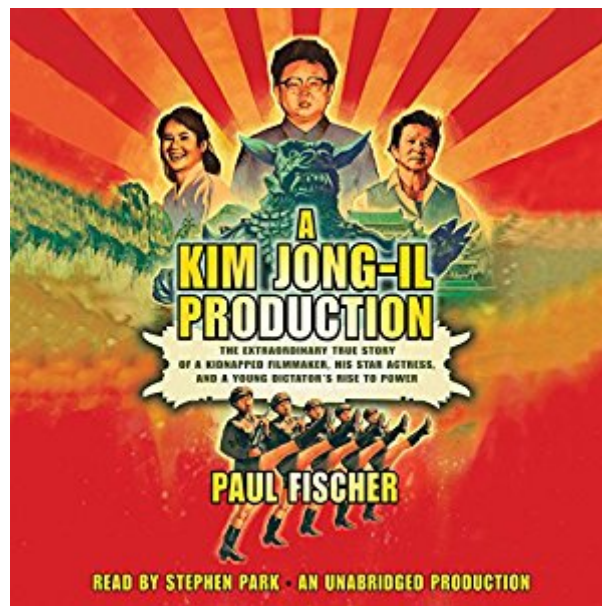


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A Kim Jong-Il Production: The Extraordinary True Story Of A Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Star Actress, And A Young Dictator's Rise To Power



Synopsis

Before becoming the world's most notorious dictator, Kim Jong-Il ran North Korea's Ministry for Propaganda and its film studios. Conceiving every movie made, he acted as producer and screenwriter. Despite this control, he was underwhelmed by the available talent and took drastic steps, ordering the kidnapping of Choi Eun-Hee (Madam Choi) - South Korea's most famous actress - and her ex-husband Shin Sang-Ok, the country's most famous filmmaker. Madam Choi vanished first. When Shin went to Hong Kong to investigate, he was attacked and woke up wrapped in plastic sheeting aboard a ship bound for North Korea. Madam Choi lived in isolated luxury, allowed only to attend the Dear Leader's dinner parties. Shin, meanwhile, tried to escape, was sent to prison camp, and "re-educated". After four years he cracked, pledging loyalty. Reunited with Choi at the first party he attends, it is announced that the couple will remarry and act as the Dear Leader's film advisors. Together they made seven films, in the process gaining Kim Jong-Il's trust. While pretending to research a film in Vienna, they flee to the U.S. embassy and are swept to safety. A nonfiction thriller packed with tension, passion, and politics, A Kim Jong-Il Production offers a rare glimpse into a secretive world, illuminating a fascinating chapter of North Korea's history that helps explain how it became the hermetically sealed, intensely stage-managed country it remains today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a retelling of the bizarre tale of how North Korean agents in 1978 kidnapped South Korea's top director and No. 1 female star, taking the pair to Pyongyang to make movies for the

seriously peculiar second-generation dictator Kim Jong Il. As Paul Fischer reminds us, Kim Jong Il focused much of his time and enthusiasm on show business during the decades he was securing his position as designated successor to his father, Kim Il Sung, the founder of the communist North Korean state. Like Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's fourth wife and one of the leaders of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Kim Jong Il sought to tear apart existing forms in film (and in opera) so he could remake them in the service of a new ideological emphasis. In North Korea's case, everything had to contribute to the people's single-hearted worship of the leader. Kim had an artistic sensibility and organizational skills. He managed with his limited domestic resources to produce some notable works. But the lifelong film buff watched with dismay as the narrowness of theme that he had imposed and the bureaucratic sloth of his movie-making subordinates put the country farther and farther behind world standards. Thanks to the Kim dynasty's notorious penchant for playing God, North Korea already had put in place the infrastructure for kidnapping foreigners to work in spy-training institutes as teachers and models of foreign languages and cultures. So it wasn't much of a leap for Kim Jong Il to have his men abduct South Korean actress Choi Eun-hee and then her estranged husband, the South's leading director, Shin Sang-ok. With the recalcitrant Shin finally tortured into submission, Kim gave the reunited pair carte blanche to make world-class movies.

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