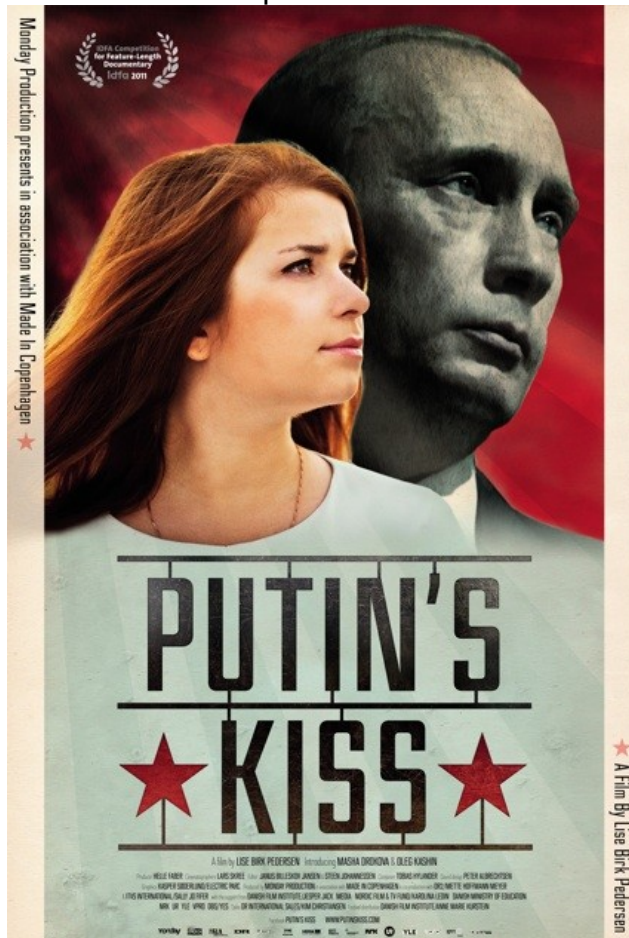


KINO LORBER i n c o r p o r a t e d

presents



A Film by Lise Birk Pedersen

2011 / Denmark-Russia / 85 min. / Color / Russian with English subtitles

A Kino Lorber Release
from
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CREDITS

Special thanks to
Maria Drokova & Oleg Kashin

Director
Lise Birk Pedersen

Producer
Helle Faber

Cinematographer
Lars Skree

Editors
Janus Billeskov Jansen
Steen Johannessen

Sound design
Peter Albrechtsen

Music
Tobias Hylander

Produced by Monday Production in association with made in copenhagen

in co-production with DR2/Mette Hoffmann Meyer

&

ITVS International/EP Sally Jo Fifer
with the support from
The Danish Film Institute/Jesper Jack
Media Slatefunding
Nordic Film & TV Fund/Karolina Ledin
Danish Ministry of Education

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SYNOPSIS

Nashi is an increasingly popular political youth organization with direct ties to the Kremlin. Officially, its goal is to support the current political system by creating a future elite among the brightest and most loyal Russian teenagers. But the organization also works to prevent the political opposition from spreading their views among young people.

Nineteen-year-old Masha, a Nashi commissar and spokesperson, is a middle class girl who lives with her family in a small flat in the outskirts of Moscow. Young and ambitious, she joined Nashi at the age of 16 and quickly moved to the very top of the organization, becoming the protege of Russia's Minister of Youth.

According to the opposition, Masha belongs to a well-mannered and democratic faction of Nashi. But the group also has a shadowy and more reactionary wing that is secretly responsible for threats and violent attacks against anyone who doesn't agree with Putin.

During her time as Nashi's political leader, Masha is exposed to people with other political views - including the journalist Oleg Khasin, with whom she debates on television. Although they passionately disagree, Masha and Oleg surprise all their respective friends by becoming close friends.

Masha's new acquaintances soon get her in trouble with Nashi, and eventually, she loses her bid for re-election to a candidate whose program is called "fighting the enemies of Russia." Moreover, when "unknown perpetrators" attack Oleg Kashin, she starts questioning her role in the Nashi movement - and realizes that she finally needs to make a stand.



Director's Statement

Four years ago, I went to Moscow to research and get closer to 'The New Russia.' There I met Masha Drokova, an 18-year-old girl who loved Putin, and everything he stands for. With great passion, she told me about Nashi, a youth organization that she [represented]. According to Masha, Nashi would ensure a Russian rule of the world in the 21st Century.

Masha was captivating, obviously, because of her enthusiasm and sense of direction, but at the same time she was young at heart and possessed a youthful sweetness and optimism -- a sharp contrast to the old-fashioned, totalitarian way of worshipping Putin. When she showed me around, she brought me to a tent that Nashi had fitted out as an emergency headquarters in case a revolution should break out in Russia. From [the tent, they] would be able to defend [the country] under any circumstances. Later, I learned that the headquarters, this mobile office, was part of a much larger strategy aimed at young members: it gave the impression that the political opposition posed a great threat to Russian security and [should] be considered enemies of Russia.

Masha brought me close to 'The New Russia' in a way I had never experienced. I was placed in the center of the political conflict that stirs Russia these very days. It is a conflict between different views of how to implement democracy in a country with a long history of dictatorship. It was both fascinating and scary to enter the Nashi world: a super modern and attractive youth environment with beautiful and intelligent young people, who dream of a great future -- for themselves and for their country. But Nashi is also a movement that -- with its undivided devotion to political icons -- bears a frightening resemblance to other fanatic youth organizations of the past.

To me, Masha is the essence of 'The New Russia.' She was born when The Soviet Union collapsed and belongs to the first generation of the new country. [Until she started to test their rules and ideals,] Nashi gave Masha, and many other ambitious young people, the opportunity to "become something important" -- which makes it easy to understand why an organization like [like this one] is so popular with the young. The film explores the complexity that pervades modern Russia, exemplified in the story of a young girl who, as the film progresses, grows up and learns to stand on her own two feet.

Lise Birk Pedersen

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Biographies

Helle Faber, Producer

Born in 1966, Helle Faber is the founder of the Danish production company Made In Copenhagen. She has produced a large number of documentary films for the international market, among them the award winning films *Putin's Kiss* (2011), *Dark Side of Chocolate* (2010), *Shanghai Space* (2009) and *Enemies of Happiness* (2006), which received the Silver Wolf Award at IDFA 2006, the World Cinema Prize at Sundance 2007 & the Cinema for Peace in Berlin 2008. Helle graduated from The Danish School of Journalism in 1991.

Lise Birk Pedersen, Director

Born in Denmark in 1974, Lise Birk Pedersen graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2003. She made her graduation film, "Margarita", about the complex mind of a Russian teenager immigrating to Denmark. Since then, Lise has made various TV programs and short documentaries.

Her films in 2011 include two films from Russia: "Nastya in Love", a teenage love story from a transit home in Saint Petersburg, and "Putin's Kiss", which is her first feature-length documentary. "Putin's Kiss" was selected for Sundance Film Festival in 2012.

Masha Drokova

Masha Drokova was born in Tambov, Russia in 1989. She joined Nashi at the age of 15 and quickly rose to be a spokesperson for the movement, as well as a well-known blogger and TV host.

Since her departure from Nashi, she has abstained from participating in national politics; she currently lives in Moscow and co-owns a PR company specializing in social media.

Oleg Kashin

Oleg Kashin was born in Kaliningrad, Russia in 1980. Originally a journalist for a pro-Kremlin paper, he now writes for the daily Kommersant and is one of the profiled voices of the current protest movement in Russia. In November 2010, he was almost beaten to death after criticizing a long list of government projects and pro-Kremlin groups.