

girl model

A film by
David Redmon & Ashley Sabin

77 minutes, 16:9, Stereo, Color, Not Rated, English & Russian & Japanese w/ English Subtitles



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Praise for *Girl Model*

“Stirring Portrait.” – *Fan Quarterly*

“Powerful.” – *The Film Stage*

“A provocative documentary that looks into a dark, seldom-seen segment of the modeling industry.” – *The Gulf Today*

“This ex-model, Ashley Arbaugh, is one of the year’s most intriguing doc characters, one I’d love to see get a spin off reality series where she’s paired up with Tabloid’s Joyce McKenna. *Girl Model* is the film I keep finding reasons to want to revisit, rewatch, and implore friends to see as soon as it’s distributed.” – *Movies.com*

“David Redmon and Ashley Sabin’s engrossing documentary provides access to a pitiless niche of the fashion industry, but it’s arguably more fascinating in its depiction of the recruiters than their discoveries.” – *Hollywood Reporter*

“Eerie, visceral horror haunts every scene.” – *Indiewire**

*Also at the top of the *Indiewire* TIFF poll)

“A must-see movie as intriguing as it is disturbing.” – *Marie Claire*

“A fascinating look at the stark, staring mad world of modeling.” – *The Times*

“Visceral horror that haunts every scene. *Girl Model* portrays a business defined by inherent corruption.” – *Toronto Review*

“Redmon and Sabin have crafted a revealing and engrossing film. Everyone – particularly young people (both female and male) who aspire to be a model should see it.” – *Toronto Verve*

“A very chilling tale on the loss of childhood to false hopes and dreams.” – *Triplew.me*

“A haunted glimpse into exploited youth.” – *Variety*

“Shows a seedy, unregulated side to the modeling business.” – *Vive Magazine*

About the Film

Told through the eyes of a 13-year-old Siberian girl and the American scout who discovered her, ***Girl Model*** follows a complex global supply chain of young girls sent abroad to seek their fortunes in the unregulated and often murky world of the modeling industry.

Despite a lack of obvious similarities between Siberia and Tokyo, a thriving model industry connects these distant regions. ***Girl Model*** follows two protagonists involved in this industry: Ashley, a deeply ambivalent model scout who scours the Siberian countryside looking for fresh faces to send to the Japanese market, and one of her discoveries, Nadya, a 13-year-old plucked from her rustic home in Russia and dropped into the center of bustling Tokyo with promises of a profitable career. After Ashley's initial discovery of Nadya, they rarely meet again, but their stories are inextricably bound. As Nadya's optimism about rescuing her family from financial hardship grows, her dreams contrast against Ashley's more jaded outlook about the industry's corrosive influence.

Girl Model is a lyrical exploration of a world defined by glass surfaces and camera lenses, reflecting back differing versions of reality to the young women caught in their scope. As we enter further into this world, it more and more resembles a hall of mirrors, where appearances can't be trusted, perception become distorted and there is no clear way out. Will Nadya, and the other girls like her, be able to find anyone to help them navigate this maze, or will they follow a path like Ashley's, having learned the tricks of the labyrinth but unable to escape its lure? Indeed, it's difficult to know who these young girls can trust and where the industry will take them.

Film Festivals & Awards

Festivals:

Abu Dhabi Film Festival
Arizona Film Festival
Atlanta Film Festival
Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival
Camden International Film Festival
Cleveland Film Festival
CPH:Dox
Cucalorus Film Festival
Dallas International Film Festival
Docaviv Film Festival
Doxa Documentary Film Festival
Festival do Rio

Florida Film Festival
Flying Broom Women's Film Festival
Full Frame Film Festival
Glasgow Film Festival
Goteborg Film Festival
IDFA
Independent Film Festival of Boston
Indie Grits Film Festival
International Film Festival for Children and Youth
International Independent Film Festival of Mar del Plata
International Women's Film Festival
Makedox 2012
Nashville Film Festival
One World Film Festival
Planete Doc Review Film Festival
River Run Film Festival
Rome International
Sarasota Film Festival
Sebastopol Film Festival
Stranger than Fiction
SXSW
Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival
The Eötvös Loránd University Budapest (ELTE) Docu Fest
Toronto Film Festival
Victoria Film Festival
Wisconsin Film Festival
Women's International Film Festival
Yes Film Festival
Zagrebdox

Awards:

Rome Film Festival Marc'Aurelio Award for Best Documentary in the Extra Section & EnelCuore Prize

Filmmaker Bios

David Redmon and Ashley Sabin have produced, directed, edited and photographed six feature documentaries: *Mardi Gras: Made in China* (2005), *Kamp Katrina* (2007), *Intimidad* (2008), *Invisible Girlfriend* (2009), *Girl Model* (2011) and *Downeast* (2012). Their intimate and intricately crafted documentaries have won a variety of film festival awards. Their work has aired on television stations throughout the world. Redmon received his PhD in sociology from the University at Albany, State University of New York. In 2010/2011 he was a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. Sabin received her BA in Art History from Pratt Institute.

Interview with the Filmmakers

How did you first become involved with the story of 'Girl Model'?

ASHLEY SABIN: This is the first time we've made a film where the idea came to us from the main subject. I attended Pratt Institute with Ashley Arbaugh where we both studied Art History. I remembered her because she was frequently gone on casting trips and afterward would ask me for the notes to our "Chemistry of Art" class. Years later, Ashley saw couple of our films when they screened at MoMA and got in touch to suggest that a film about her work scouting young girls to be sent overseas to model would make an interesting documentary. We were wary at first but after hours of long conversations we decided that there really was something to the story and so decided to try and make it work.

How long have you been working on this project?

DAVID REDMON: We began production the summer of 2008 inside a Victoria's Secret sweatshop in China, where Ashley Arbaugh told us off-camera that Russian girls would be modeling her fashion line in Paris. Over the next eighteen months, we traveled to Connecticut, New York, Paris, cities throughout Russia three times and Japan twice. We've been editing and translating the film since 2009 – a lot longer than we first anticipated. But this turned out to be a much more complicated storyline than we ever could have expected.

How was the experience of this film different from your other projects?

DAVID REDMON: We experienced a lot of uncertainty and ran into some very unusual power dynamics throughout the making of 'Girl Model.' And while it's great for the story, and is likely what helped create the powerful unspoken tensions in the film, it

made for a very difficult experience for us as directors. Because some of the people we filmed didn't ultimately trust us, it often felt like we were producing the film in a constant gray area.

ASHLEY SABIN: Unlike our previous films, this time around we were forced to figure things out while we were filming, to try and establish what each person's motivation was, to determine if we could trust what they were telling us. It was inside this murky space that we were pushed to some very uncomfortable places.

In the film, it's clear that Nadya, the 13-year-old model you profile, is desperately in need of someone who she can trust and turn to for support. Was it difficult to maintain a boundary between subject and filmmaker?

DAVID REDMON: I think Nadya's age made the entire situation very difficult. We were the adults and she looked to us for support when people in the modeling industry wouldn't assist. From time to time, when the situation demanded it, we stepped in to provide a little guidance, although none of these experiences are in the film. Frankly, though, I don't know what she would have done or how she would have navigated her complications without at least a little bit of our help.

ASHLEY SABIN: Additionally, the language barrier made the situation more complicated for everyone. For instance, when Nadya first arrived at the airport in Tokyo, she was expected to find her way to the agency on her own, with just an address on a slip of paper. She didn't speak the language, didn't know how to get there or even how to figure it out. She didn't know who to ask or where to turn and hadn't ever traveled abroad before. Had we not intervened to help her find the way, she would have become exasperated, completely lost in Tokyo and probably would have lost all trust in us. It was one of the rare times we decided to intervene.

Have you heard from Nadya lately? What is she doing now?

ASHLEY SABIN: We recently receive a message from Nadya that she has decided to continue working as a model. Having gone through the emotional experience of her first trip to Japan, it's a bit incredible to us that she'd want to continue that line of work. But we also understand that, because of her background and the economic situation of her family, she still views the prospect of being a model as an opportunity to escape and work overseas.

DAVID REDMON: The problem, however, is that when 12-15 year old girls are placed inside a marketplace of adults that sexualizes them and treats them as disposable goods, there's an infinite potential for the situation to go awry. At this point, we can only hope for the best for her.

Credits

Directed by	David Redmon, A. Sabin
Consulting Producer	Marcy Garriott, Robert Garriott
Edited by	David Redmon, A. Sabin
Second Editors	Darius Marder, Alan Canant
Cinematography by	David Redmon, A. Sabin
Original Score by	Matthew Dougherty, Eric Taxier
Digital Intermediate services by	Alpha Cine Labs
DI Colorist	Marc Brown
DI Online Editor	Bevin Flynn
DI Producers Kristen Molina	Jannat Gargi
Audio Post Prod. provided by	Tom Hammond
Production Stills	Meghan Brosnan
Graphic Designer	Jesse Bussey
Attorney	Jeffrey Coploff
Additional Diary Footage	Ashley Arbaugh
Creative Consultants	Ashley Arbaugh, Mark Becker, Aron Gaudet, Mary Lampson, Donal Mosher, Robb Moss, Michael Palmieri Gita Pullapilly, Jeff Silva, Basil Tsoikas
Translation	Linda, Mark Berelekhis, Anna Boedeker, Natasha Boltukhova, Dmitri Rozin, Sergey Strizhov, Shiho Uehara

Girl Model received funding through the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, Cinereach, Puffin Foundation, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, IFP, Chicken and Egg Pictures and The Fledgling Fund. In 2012 it will air on POV in the United States, CBC in Canada and BBC in the UK.

<http://www.sundancechannel.com/sunfiltered/2012/08/girl-model-exposes-the-truth-behind-the-modeling-industry/>



GIRL MODEL exposes the truth behind the modeling industry

August 8, 2012

The documentary GIRL MODEL provides a fascinating glimpse behind the scenes of the fashion industry, viewed from two perspectives: a former model turned scout, and a young Siberian girl being recruited. Co-director Ashley Sabin tells SUNfiltered that she hopes GIRL MODEL encourages viewers to “look beyond the image” and become more media-literate about fashion editorials, advertisements and models. The film brings to light the people and labor behind such images, challenging viewers to think about where their media come from. Modeling can demand a high cost of people, one that many consumers aren’t aware of.

In the past decade or so, there has been considerable cultural attention to topics like models’ physical health and the images projected to women and girls. A recent teen-led and SPARK Summit-backed campaign to get major magazines to stop using altered images in their pages attracted major headlines when *Seventeen* signed a “body peace pledge.” But there has been far less focus on the backend of the industry and what happens in business offices and casting calls. GIRL MODEL cracks this wide open, and some of the things it puts on display may surprise viewers when it premieres on September 5.

Directors (and Sundance alums) Sabin and David Redmon traveled back and forth between Siberia and Tokyo over the course of the film, following the interconnected but ultimately separate paths of model scout Ashley Arbaugh and model Nadya. The brutal casting call that opens the film shows us a room filled with milling girls in bikinis undergoing ruthless scrutiny from model scouts looking for the next big find; Arbaugh talks about how the agency she represents gets girls “early.” Nadya, fresh-faced and young, looks disoriented and unsure of herself.

For every famous supermodel, scores of girls struggle to get known in the industry; Sabin likens it to the chances of winning the jackpot. GIRL MODEL follows the predatory practices used by recruiters and modeling agencies, and highlights the consequences of those actions through Nadya’s interactions with the industry. She comes from a community where mothers encourage their daughters to model to provide them with an escape route — and generate income for their families. Many young girls are eager to comply, seizing a chance at getting out and building something better for themselves. That creates circumstances ripe for exploitation, as many models start their careers young and with limited knowledge of the industry (or the world).

“People want to get angry at Nadya’s family,” Sabin tells SUNfiltered, “but [you have to] look at the historical and cultural context.”

Sabin pointed out that while Russia and Brazil have become major scouting locations, scouts are also active right in middle America, where they look for low-income girls in malls and similar locations to recruit. What happens, Sabin asks, “for these young girls coming out of Siberia or anywhere around the world, if you pull your way out of your social network, your family, your friends, your school... what do you do when your modeling career ends?”

The film, which raises this question and many more, is being supported by backers on Kickstarter; you can become one of them.

<http://runway.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/09/documentary-is-another-voice-in-the-underage-model-conversation/?ref=fashion>

The New York Times

On the Runway

ALL THINGS FASHION



April 9, 2012, 10:05 am

Documentary Is Another Voice in the Underage Model Conversation

By [JOANNA NIKAS](#)

The documentary “Girl Model” opens with hundreds of scantily clad adolescent and teenage girls lined up in an auditorium. A model scout calls models one-by-one to the stage and begins commenting on their weight, body shape and signs of acne.

Heavy scrutiny of young supermodel hopefuls won't come as a surprise to most people familiar with the business, but the film illuminates and personalizes some details to which even fashion insiders may not be privy.

The documentary, by Ashley Sabin and David Redmon, was first shown in the United States at this year's South by Southwest festival in Austin, and at the IFC Center in New York City shortly after.

The narrative intertwines the stories of Ashley Arbaugh, a model scout, and Nadya, a 13-year-old girl from a poor family in Siberia. Ms. Arbaugh's and Nadya's paths cross on one of the scout's trips on the Trans-Siberian Railway as she looks for girls who might be attractive to the Japanese fashion market. Nadya, who speaks only Russian, is handed a contract in English and Japanese and is promised \$8,000. She is not told that her living costs will be deducted from that amount.

After many unsuccessful castings, Nadya returns to Russia in debt.

In one scene, Nadya's modeling reel shows her staring and posing suggestively at the camera for what seemed like forever. “Nadya had images in her room of models and fashion images plastered up on her family house,” Ms. Sabin said. “And I think that as a young girl, when you see those images every day, that's how you get drawn into that glamor and the allure and the mystery behind it. And the idea of being a top model was

probably something she had considered. But at 13, 14, 15, how much can they really understand about the dreams versus the reality?"

Ashley Sabin and David Redmon A model casting in Russia shown in the film.

"Girl Model" comes about two months after the Council of Fashion Designers of America [issued guidelines in hopes of regulating age standards in the industry](#). The mission statement on the council's Web site reads: "Support the well-being of younger individuals by not hiring models under the age of 16 for runway shows; not allowing models under the age of 18 to work past midnight at fittings or shoots; and providing regular breaks and rest." Still, it is a designer's choice which model he or she uses. During New York Fashion Week in February, Eric Wilson reported that Marc Jacobs [hired a 14- and 15-year-old for his fall 2012 runway show](#).

At the screening were representatives from Models Alliance, an advocacy group that aims to create better working conditions for models. Ms. Sabin said she hopes that organizations can use the film as a tool to create regulation, "or at least have a conversation about why there is such a lack of transparency in a marketplace that is predominantly young women."

"Girl Model" will be shown at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in North Carolina from April 12 to 15. [Full location listing](#).

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/10/girl-model-trailer-n-1414307.html?utm_campaign=041012&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Alert-style&utm_content=FullStory

HUFF
POST STYLE

'Girl Model' Documentary Sheds New Light On Underage Modeling Problem

By [Ellie Krupnick & Jessica Misener](#)

Posted: 04/10/2012

How young is *too* young to model? 16? 15? 12?

It's a sticky question, and one that often comes up against the fashion industry's proclivities for youth. A recent and award-winning documentary aims to humanize this paradox. "[Girl Model](#)" first debuted months ago, and the movie [premiered at South by Southwest in March](#), but [the New York Times revives the questions the movie brings up this week](#).

Directed by David Redmon & Ashley Sabin, "Girl Model" follows the story of a young girl from Siberia who gets snapped up by a scout and flung into the Japanese modeling scene with little money or language skills. [From the NYT](#):

The narrative intertwines the stories of Ashley Arbaugh, a model scout, and Nadya, a 13-year-old girl from a poor family in Siberia. Ms. Arbaugh's and Nadya's paths cross on one of the scout's trips on the Trans-Siberian Railway as she looks for girls who might be attractive to the Japanese fashion market. Nadya, who speaks only Russian, is handed a contract in English and Japanese and is promised \$8,000. She is not told that her living costs will be deducted from that amount.

After many unsuccessful castings, Nadya returns to Russia in debt. "The whole modeling industry and the young girls involved in it are such a recipe for disaster," Sabin told the *Austin Chronicle*. "I feel like in many ways we document a disaster."

The documentary drops under a media spotlight that's already been exposing the potential dangers of the modeling world. Just this year, [Marc Jacobs has received scorn for hiring underage models](#); the [Council of Fashion Designers of America has refocused its best practices](#) guidelines for the industry; and, model [Sarah Ziff founded the Model Alliance](#) to bring more awareness to the pitfalls of the biz.

"Girl Model" opens in Canada on April 13th and [will be shown at screenings around the country this year](#). Watch the trailer above to see Nadya's story and vote below: do you think she's too young to be dipping her toe into the modeling world?

http://www.examiner.com/review/girl-model-exposes-ugliness-of-model-business?cid=db_articles



‘Girl Model’ exposes ugliness of model business

AUGUST 6, 2012 | BY TERRA KING

Director **David Redmon**’s poignant documentary, “**Girl Model**,” exposes the intimate side of girls who have nothing trying to make it in modeling. It is told from the perspective of **Ashley Arbaugh**, who is a scout (a person who goes to these out of the way places to find these girls). Arbaugh is a former model and knew all the ropes. There are photos and video of her shown.

In a way it is also told by the girl, Nadya. This beautiful young girl can’t speak English. She’s horrified at being far from home with no money and no one with her except her roommate, who decides to leave as a result of the situation.

Nadya is chosen from a large group of girls from around Siberia. The wannabe models show up in their skimpy bathing suits, with their paper thin, prepubescent bodies. The man in charge of casting tells one contestant she needs to work on her pimples. The girl responds to this by telling him, “It’s only temporary, I have my period.” He told Ashley after seeing one particular girl that her hips are too large. She had no hips whatsoever. She was straight, up and down.

Soon Nadya is heading to Japan, by herself to start her beautiful new life. She has a contract that I doubt anyone in her family read. She was supposed to get two jobs and make \$8k. Nadya was given a very small apartment, which she had to share with another young girl, who was also Russian. During a phone call from her mother, she relayed that she wanted to come home that she wasn’t eating and that her roommate was able to eat because her parents gave her a credit card, something Nadya’s family couldn’t afford.

Nadya attended many casting calls. She never got a job. She never received any money as she was supposed to and in reality left Japan owing the company \$2k.

The final scene of the film will blow you away. I won’t reveal it here, but it is the epitome of the modeling business. This film is opening in limited release on September 5th.

<http://realscreen.com/2012/03/16/austin-translation-ashley-sabin-and-rachel-blais-girl-model/>



Austin Translation: Ashley Sabin and Rachel Blais, “Girl Model”

3 days ago by [Adam Benzine](#)

After getting its world premiere at TIFF in Toronto last fall, Ashley Sabin and David Redmon’s doc *Girl Model* this week had its U.S. premiere at SXSW in Texas, with First Run Features simultaneously announcing that it would be picking up U.S. rights for the film.

The film was recently released by Dogwoof in the UK, and First Run will roll out the doc theatrically in the States this summer, with a DVD and VoD release set for the autumn, to coincide with the film’s broadcast premiere on PBS’s ‘POV.’

Girl Model follows a modeling scout and the young Siberian girl she discovers, as they make their way through the murky realm of the modeling industry in the Far East. It received funding through the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, Cinereach, Puffin Foundation, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, IFP, Chicken and Egg Pictures and the Fledgling Fund.

Here, Sabin (pictured left), the film’s co-director, and Rachel Blais (right), one of the models featured in the film, talk to *realscreen*.

How is your SXSW going so far?

Sabin: Well, we’ve just had the premiere at the Ritz and it was the first time it showed in the U.S., and it was fantastic – we had a sold out audience. The Q&A is always interesting afterwards because we’ve traveled to a bunch of locations in Europe, and I was really curious to see how people were going to respond here. It seemed like a lot of the questions were about the ethics of the documentary and making the film. To me, that’s really interesting.

Has there been a notable difference in reaction from North American audiences and European audiences?

Sabin: The difference really lies in how people really understand the main talent scout, and whether they connect with or disconnect from her storyline, and also how they view us as filmmakers. From my experience of screening in North America, it seems it like it is a lot about ethics.

‘How did you get that footage? Did you help [the main model in the film] Nadya? Did you pay Nadya?’ [are the sorts of questions asked]. And that latter question really comes out of concern that we were taking advantage of the situation. Whereas I feel in Europe it was more about storytelling, and the technical questions were really about how we composed the story and the nuances. So it has been a little bit different.

Blais: I think that the question as to whether [Nadya] was paid came up at IDFA as well, and it came up in Estonia too. To me, it depends who the audience is. We did a screening in London where the audience was mainly people from fashion, and that was quite different. The questions became quite different.

Rachel, what’s been your experience of traveling with David and Ashley’s documentary? And are you still working as a model?

Blais: Well, ever since the premiere at Toronto, work has gone down quite a bit actually. Maybe it’s pure coincidence, but when it goes on for quite a few months, it kind of feels like they’re trying to censor me in a certain way.

But I am still working as a model, and I have a few clients here and there that still book me and are also aware of what I’m doing [promoting *Girl Model*] and really respect what I’m doing, and don’t want to work with young children anymore because they think it’s wrong. Even though they can’t really say that.

Altogether, I think it has been a really good way of taking the experiences I’ve had through modeling and the knowledge I’ve gained, and it’s great to be out there and talking to people. It can be a very difficult film to watch.

What are your impressions of SXSW?

Sabin: Well, [David Redmon and I have] been here before with two other films, and we came once without a film, so this is our fourth time, and it has grown an unbelievable amount in the last couple of years. When we first screened here, the audience was not anywhere near the capacity it is now.

It’s really fascinating to see the Interactive side grow, and I think that’s where a lot of the audience has come out of. Our experiences have really changed because the first few times we screened here we were lucky to fill half the house, and now you have a packed house. It’s really become vibrant in the past couple of years, and really come on the radar – not just for people within the U.S., but different markets are starting to really recognize it as place that’s important for premieres.

You and David have another film premiering next month at Tribeca in New York, can you tell me a little bit about it?

Sabin: It's called *Downeast* and it's shot in Downeast, Maine, and it is sort of about the wind and boats – we followed this man in his pursuit to open a lobster processing facility in the last sardine cannery that closed about a year ago. So it's sort of a portrait of a small town and how the local economy is really important to the town's survival and keeping it alive.

How did you fund *Downeast*?

Sabin: David was in charge of the funding of that film, which basically means full steam ahead and not applying for grants [laughs]. Whereas with *Girl Model* – funding cycles are interesting because you get in this cycle where you apply and then the funders aren't quite sure, you develop more footage, and you apply a second a time... you're reforming your idea.

With *Girl Model* we were lucky because we were working on that project for four years, whereas with *Downeast* being such a quick project – it took us about a year and a half – there wasn't enough time, in a sense, to apply for all these grants because your story is not fully developed at that point. We're still editing so we're still finding what we have.

Do you think, on reflection, that *Girl Model* has made or will make any difference to the practices of the modeling industry?

Sabin: I think we're at beginning of something really exciting, which is [that] between Equity in the UK and the Model Alliance in New York, the film can now be used as a social tool to promote a conversation about regulation.

At the very least we can say, 'Why are these young girls in the industry and if they are there and they're vulnerable, let's regulate it so that difficult and trying situations don't happen, and you don't have variables.' At the very least that's exciting for me.

We don't make films to simplify issues or make them easily digestible. Our films are always about those grey areas, and they challenge audiences to say, 'These issues are extremely complicated, so how do you feel about it?'