



NORTHERN LIGHT

a film by nick bentgen & lisa kjerulff

A FILM BY NICK BENTGEN & LISA KJERULFF
"NORTHERN LIGHT"

DIRECTED & PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICK BENTGEN PRODUCED BY LISA KJERULFF EDITOR YOONHA PARK ADDITIONAL EDITOR SAELA DAVIS
MUSIC BY SAUNDER JURRIANS & DANNY BENSI SOUND DESIGN AND RE-RECORDING MIXING JUAN ABOITES, ALLISON CASEY & MARK PHILLIPS
DESIGN BY FAMILIAR THE FILMMAKERS WISH TO THANK THE GARLINGHOUSE FAMILY THE KOMARNIZKI FAMILY THE WOLFGANG FAMILY
CO-PRODUCERS BERNARD BENTGEN CHRISTY KELLY-BENTGEN TOM PAITSON KELLY & GREGORY REARDON AMELIA & JON HUGHES

www.northernlightfilm.com



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A FILM BY
NICK BENTGEN & LISA KJERULFF

AN ICARUS FILMS RELEASE

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AVAILABLE NOW ON ITUNES

105 MIN / COLOR / 1.78 / 1080P / STEREO

“There’s a stillness to the filmmaking, coupled with Saunder Jurriaans and Danny Bensi’s truly lovely original score, that lends specific shots — toddlers bundled up like pastel Ewoks on a snowdrift, or a bakery window glowing like a still life in a gallery — a near-heartbreaking melancholy.”

Jeannette Catsoulis, **THE NEW YORK TIMES**
Critic’s Pick

“So beautiful, and so poignantly clear-eyed about the struggle of rural, working-class people towards impossible dreams. Northern Light belongs on any list of the year’s great docs.”

Sam Adams, **INDIEWIRE**

“Indeed, this exquisite documentary feels as if it’s being made in the moment...”

Wes Greene, **SLANT**

“A stellar doc of real American beauty. The gorgeous trailer for Northern Light is no preparation for the full-on film. There are a thousand movies out right now, but Northern Light is the one not to miss. A strange, singular heartbreaker of a film.”

Alan Scherstuhl, **THE VILLAGE VOICE**
Critic’s Pick

SYNOPSIS

NORTHERN LIGHT interweaves the lives of three families in the northwoods of Michigan.

Set against the backdrop of a town's annual snowmobile race, this cinematic, observational documentary explores the American working class experience. As racers and their families pin their hopes to a 500 mile-long test of endurance, small triumphs and giant sacrifices are made along the way.



“Patient, observant, and deeply generous.”

Michael Tully, **HAMMER TO NAIL**

“A mosaic of moments among parents and children, life partners and friends, all rendered with lucent beauty by cinematographer Bentgen, making his directorial debut. It’s an elegantly assembled work that gathers slowly.”

Nicolas Rapold, **FILM COMMENT**

“Told in short, stolen snippets, it’s one beautiful image after another...”

Matt Prigge, **METRO**



“I’ll not soon forget the durational brilliance of an extended fixed shot of a snow-suited timekeeper on a frozen lake patiently waiting as a snowmobile zips into and out of view, its roar slowly fading into the wintry quiet and then reviving before the vehicle comes speeding through the frame again, as tedious and entrancing as a clock.”

Eric Hynes, **CINEMA SCOPE**

“9/10 Stars. As you contemplate this stunning, lyrical, transporting film, you can see, that the road ahead may be different.”

Cynthia Fuchs, **POPMATTERS**

*“While the snowmobile race at the center of the film is dramatic and engrossing, encompassing an entire film within itself, it’s the small, quiet glimpses that pull the viewer in, casting a compassionate eye on lives on the margins. But everybody struggles, and on a fundamental level *NORTHERN LIGHT* is a film we can all relate to.”*

Craig Hubert, **ARTINFO**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan means a great deal to me. My father grew up in Saint Ignace, and my family has lived there for five generations. I've always been fascinated by the region's frozen landscape and the lifestyle it fosters.

I spent two years in Michigan filming **NORTHERN LIGHT**. My filmmaking partner, Lisa Kjerulff, and I began photographing three families who were about to compete in the Sault Ste. Marie I-500, an annual snowmobile race in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

This race was unlike anything we'd ever seen--a rich and dramatic community gathering and an undeniably cinematic spectacle. Snowmobiles hurtled at breakneck speeds around a mile-long oval track of pure ice for 500 miles. A crowd of thousands stood on giant hills of snow, transfixed throughout the morning and into the freezing night. We quickly discovered that beyond the loud, explosive action of this race was a community marked by genuine devotion and hard work--breakfasts before dawn, prayers before dinner, and naps after the night shift.

We continued to film after the race, capturing intimate portraits of these families as they were making it through the day. As we kept filming, the effects of the financial crisis took hold of the country, and the lives of Walt, Marie, Emily & Isaac and their families began to change profoundly.

We became captivated by their dramatic and unexpected stories. We decided to craft an observational film that tracks the intertwining lives of these three families--no interviews, no explanations, just the drama of life unfolding in the present tense.

We stayed in each family's home and cooked dinners together. We shared many warm holidays. Emily, Isaac, Walt, Becky, Nick and Marie and their families invited us into

their lives with a level of trust and honesty that still amazes me. They allowed us to create an emotional film that immerses the viewer in the changing lives of working class Americans.

Throughout the production of this film, I was humbled by the stubborn work-ethic of the families I came to know. Walt woke before dawn to drive his eighteen-wheeler to Alabama, Texas, and Pennsylvania. In the span of a single day, Marie worked the early shift at Walmart, picked up extra hours as a cleaning lady, cooked dinner for her children, and studied for her exams late into the night.

The families of rural Michigan are the inheritors of pioneers and homesteaders; ruggedly independent and determined, living with hope in an unforgiving environment and retaining a spirit of self-reliance I can know only by example. I'm amazed by the footage we've captured--its quality not created by any technique, but found, in the genuine and generous nature of three compelling American families. I'm proud to have shared this experience with them.

-Nick Bentgen



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

NICK BENTGEN (DIRECTOR / CINEMATOGRAPHER) has directed music videos for *Small Black*, *Bear In Heaven*, *Sinkane*, and *Pitchfork's Juan's Basement*; as well as commercials for *Google*, *New York City Ballet*, and *VW*.

Northern Light, his first feature, was a *New York Times Critic's Pick* and an official selection of the *2013 True / False Film Festival*, *Hot Docs*, *BAMcinemaFest* and winner of the Special Jury Prize for Most Innovative Feature Film at *Visions du Réel*. For his work on the film, Nick was selected for *IFP & Film Society of Lincoln Center's Emerging Visions Program* at the *2011 New York Film Festival*.

Nick is also a cinematographer. He lensed Daniel Carbone's feature narrative, *Hide Your Smiling Faces* (Berlin 2013 / Tribeca 2013); Matt Wolf's *Teenage* (Tribeca 2013 / Hot Docs 2013); and portions of Jody Lee Lipes' *Ballet 422* (Tribeca 2014).

LISA KJERULFF (PRODUCER) has produced over twenty commercial doc pieces for *New York City Ballet*, and completed the documentary *Americans In Paris: New York City Ballet on Tour*.

Lisa has produced music videos (*Small Black*, *Devendra Banhart*, *Bear in Heaven*) and commercial spots for *Google*, *Microsoft*, *Swarovski*, *Kiehl's*, *Macy's*, *American Express*, *Trident*, *Smirnoff*, and many others. She has produced for several agencies and production companies including *JWT*, *BBDO*, *Heist Projects*, *Ghost Robot* and *Plus Et Plus*.

Northern Light is her first feature.

A Film by Nick Bentgen & Lisa Kjerulff

NORTHERN LIGHT

Directed & Photographed by
Nick Bentgen

Produced by
Lisa Kjerulff

The Filmmakers Wish to Thank
The Garlinghouse Family
The Komarnizki Family
The Wolfgang Family

Co-Producers
Bernard Bentgen
Christy Kelly-Bentgen

Co-Producers
Tom Paitson Kelly
Gregory Reardon
Amelia Hughes
Jon Hughes

Associate Producers
Sierra Pettengill
Yoonha Park

Editor **Yoonha Park**

Additional Editor **Saela Davis**

Music by **Saunder Jurriaans & Danny Bensi**

Sound Design and Re-Recording MIxing

Jeff Seelye

Mark Phillips

Juan Aboites

Additional Re-Recording Mixing

Michael McMenomy

Visual Effects

Dan Anthony Kelly

Colorist **Sam Daley**

Post Production Assistants

Ariel Jackson

Maurice Maultz

Jennifer Reiland

Micah Hesse

Aaron Graham

Additional Race Photography

Paul Yee

Anna Rose Holmer

Astral Photography

Ethan Goldhammer

Still Photography

Anna Rose Holmer

Titles Designed by

FAMILIAR

Carl Williamson

Ian Crowther

Legal Services

Ryan J Hinshaw Esq.

Linda S Mensch PC

Color by Technicolor

Director Sales **Barbara Jean Kearney**

DI Producer **Kevin Vale**

The Filmmakers Wish to Thank

Our Parents - Barney, Christy, Lauritz & Juliet

Hadley Hinshaw

Ryan Hinshaw

Liam Hinshaw

Kyalea Kjerulff

Kyle Kjerulff

Lucy Kjerulff

Meiling Kjerulff

THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER PROJECT

Milton Tabbot

Rose Vincelli Gustine

Amy Dotson

Lori Cheatle

Agnes Hahn

Andrew Houchens

Lesli Klainberg
Robb Moss
Jon Reiss
Dan Schoenbrun
John Sylva
Joanna Vicente

THANKS

The Sault Ste. Marie International 500 Snowmobile Race
Board of Directors, Volunteers, Teams and their Racers

Jan Bailey
Herb Brown
Chad Colby
Bill Cryderman
Michelle Ellis
Ric Federau
Amy Jere
Terry Joss
Wesley Jourden
John Kenn
Jason Klier
Devon Kreuger
Tim Leigh
Dave Thomas

K&K Racing
Skid Row Racing
Wolfgang Motorsports

The Midwest International Racing Association
Michigan NPC Fitness Physique Figure Bikini and Body Building

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Fox Excavating - Brimley, MI

Sault Elite Cheer Squad
Blitz Cheer Squad
War Memorial Hospital
Michigan Works
Smitty's Iron Works - Midland, MI

Amber Alcorn
Clarissa Bidleman
Tara Bidleman
Katelyn Boomgaard
Tiah Borths
Lori Buckle
Jay Buckley
Janice Busher
The Clark Family
Tim Crall
Eric H. Deguise
Kevin Dunaway
Victoria Eckman
Dave & Michelle Eller
Tricia Felski
Jessica Fountain
Mike & Paul Fox
Lance Frederick
Cynthia Gagnon
Mark & Lori Garlinghouse
Brandon Garlinghouse

Mason Luke Garlinghouse
Nick & Marie Garlinghouse
Marky Garlinghouse
Tylor Garlinghouse
Terry L Habermehl
Robyn Haines
Steve Harrington
Dakota Hurley
Tristen Hurley
Jessyca Joss
Michael Kasiborski
James & Timi Kay
Shane & Jessica Kraus
Noel, Jayden, Kaylin Kraus
Walt Komarnizki, Jr.
Becky Komarnizki
Jacqueline Komarnizki
Cassandra Komarnizki
Jason Komarnizki
Jake Komarnizki
Walt Komarnizki, Sr.
Heather Marie LaFave
Michelle Layle
Nancy & Rob Letts
Rich Martinchek
Kevin Martinchek
Emily McKerchie
Jenna McKerchie
Amy McManamon
Dan Meihls Jr
Rusty Misner
Robert L. Mitchell
Annette Northrup
Angie Osborn
Tanya L Pages

Jessica Pastor
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Annie Root
Evan Sawaski
Bandy Scott
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Sonya Simmons
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"Happy Birthday"

Written by Patty & Mildred Hill
Published by Warner / Chappell Music

"Slow Hand"

Written by John Bettis & Michael Clark
Performed by Conway Twitty
Published by Warner / Chappell Music

"The Star-Spangled Banner"

Written by Frances Scott Key & John Smith

"We Weren't Born to Follow"

Written by Jon Bon Jovi & Richie Sambora
Performed by Jon Bon Jovi
Published by Sony ATV / Universal

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