



Can Major League Dreams Defy Martial Law?

The Only Real Game



A documentary by **Mirra Bank**
 Narrated by Academy Award®-winner **Melissa Leo**

Fascinating! *And it's nice to see an American export other than a Hollywood blockbuster engendering good will.*
 – Neil Genzlinger, NY Times

Masterful and extraordinary! *The wonders of the game of baseball, the dreams it arouses and the communities it creates – burst through.*
 – Ken Auletta, Media Critic for The New Yorker

Wholly absorbing! *There's a lot of heartache, but they play for love...another work in the canon of baseball poetry.*
 – Daphne Howland – Critics' Pick, Villiage Voice

Inspiring! *A story which must be told. It combines baseball with human rights and human dignity. Unlike anything you've ever seen.*
 – Jeffrey Lyons, The Lyons Den

<http://www.OnlyRealGameMovie.com>

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Running Time: 82 minutes • English and Manipuri (w/subtitles) • Rating: Unrated

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SYNOPSIS

THE ONLY REAL GAME explores the power of baseball for people in a remote and troubled place. The once princely state of Manipur, in volatile northeast India, defies gun violence, drug trafficking, and HIV/AIDS through a surprising passion for America's national pastime.

Manipur entered the Indian Union under protest in 1949, triggering a corrosive separatist conflict. For decades baseball has delivered release from daily struggles and a dream for healing a wounded society. This dream moves toward reality when First Pitch - a band of baseball-loving New Yorkers - and two Major League Baseball Envoy coaches join Manipuri men, women and children to "Play Ball."

With gifted women and girls among the best players, as well as leaders of peace and justice initiatives, this Manipuri story brings us to the heart of the Great American Game, or as Babe Ruth called it, "the only real game in the world."

LOG LINE

THE ONLY REAL GAME is a fighters' and dreamers' story about the magic of baseball for people in a remote and troubled place. The tiny state of Manipur, in strife torn northeast India defies armed conflict, drugs, gun trafficking, and HIV/AIDS through love of our national pastime. It is a far away story that brings us to the heart of the Great American Game.

Written and Directed by

Mirra Bank

Narrator

Melissa Leo

Producers

Laine Valentino, Muriel Peters
Richard Brockman, Mirra Bank

Executive Producer

Abigail E. Disney, Fork Films

A Presentation of Fork Films



A Production of
Baseball Dreams, LLC
In Association With
Nobody's Girls Inc and First Pitch
www.firstpitchusa.org

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PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS



Lalit is a young local baseball star who lives for the game. Considered the ‘best catcher in Manipur,’ Lalit must look for local work, though he wants to come to the U.S. and play in the Major Leagues. His strong minded, spirited girlfriend does not view his baseball dreams as practical.



Devika - a wife and mother of two little girls - represented India as an international softball player when she was only 17. Now working several jobs, as a counselor and trained nurse in a recovering addicts’ clinic, she still trains kids informally on her own. Devika dreams of coaching baseball professionally, but she must sustain her family and earn money for her daughters’ education.



Geet is a husband and father from a prominent family, whose own father was the victim of a political assassination. Geet served as local coordinator for ‘First Pitch,’ the US/Manipur baseball initiative, and was the only Manipuri from the program to get to New York. Geet wants to open more opportunity for fellow Manipuris.



MK Binodini Devi (Imasi) - in her 80s when we filmed; now deceased. Maharaj Sir Churachand Singh was king of Manipur from 1891-1941. Imasi, his youngest daughter, grew up to become an artist, screenwriter and a revered cultural leader. She is the ‘soul’ of baseball in Manipur and hoped to revive the ‘sportsman spirit’ that is a bedrock of Manipuri tradition. Imasi is the film’s voice of tolerance, and hope for the future. She speaks truth to power, protesting The Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Imasi wants all sides to come together, and thinks baseball is a great way to start.



Jeff Brueggemann and David Palese These two MLB Envoy coaches had both worked in Asia: China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. They knew that all previous attempts at Major League Baseball International coaching clinics in India had ended in failure, and they were determined that this one would succeed. Their ‘love affair’ with the coaches and players of Manipur is at the heart of our story. And their mission continues...

FILMMAKERS

Mirra Bank (Director/Producer) is an award-winning director of film, television and theater. Her feature documentary, *Last Dance*, was short-listed for an Academy Award. Her PBS nonfiction feature, *Nobody's Girls*, illuminated the lives of minority women in the Old West. Her independent feature, *Enormous Changes*, premiered at Sundance and went on to theatrical release. Bank has been honored with many film and television awards and commissions. Her theater work has been seen on stages around New York and in London. She serves on the Board of Directors of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, is a MacDowell Fellow and a past President of NY Women in Film and Television, where she continues to serve on the Advisory Board. She is a lifetime member of the Actors Studio, where she directs regularly.

Melissa Leo (Narrator) is an Academy Award-winning actress known for her work in television and film. She received critical acclaim and national attention in the 2008 film, *Frozen River*, earning several nominations and awards, including an Oscar nomination for Best Actress. For her role as Alice Ward in the 2010 film, *The Fighter*, she won the Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild Award and Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. Ms. Leo's television appearances include *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, *All My Children*, and *The Young Riders*. Ms. Leo currently stars in the HBO series *Treme* in the role of Antoinette "Toni" Bernette. Leo's recent work includes featured roles in the Hollywood action-thrillers *Olympus Has Fallen*, *Oblivion*, *Flight* and *Prisoners*.

Laine Valentino (Producer) most recently worked as a journalist and videographer for NY1 News. She was a Producing Partner and Director of Development for KeyLight Entertainment; feature film projects include *Razorburn*, *Ibeji*, and *Coal*, among others. She was Associate Producer on *June Weddings* starring Tom Noonan which won the Directors' Special Recognition Award at the 2007 San Francisco International Short Film Festival. Off Broadway Ms. Valentino produced the critically acclaimed productions of Nancy Hasty's *The Director* starring John Shea, and Bobbi Boland, which subsequently moved to Broadway. She was Co-Founder and for seven years served as Artistic Director of One Dream Theater in NYC. Ms. Valentino is currently developing a cooking series, *My Husband Cooks*.

Richard Brockman (Producer) is a physician and writer. He is Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Associate Attending at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. Brockman's theatrical work has been produced here and abroad. He has been published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* as well as other national and professional journals. His book, "A Map of the Mind," is published by International Universities Press. He has received awards and grants from The New York Foundation for the Arts, The South by Southwest Film Festival, Cynosure, The Texas Film Institute, the Samuel French Best Short Play Festival and the New York State Council on the Arts. He is a member of the Actors Studio Playwright-Directors Unit, and the Dramatists Guild.

Muriel "Mike" Peters (Producer) has film and TV credits that include *Listening to Volcanoes*, Indonesia (PBS/BBC); *Asia Stage Center*, Asian and Western performing artists; *Manifestations of Shiva*, PBS documentary on the worship of Shiva; *The Eye of the Storm*, ABC News, Peabody Award; and *Merchant-Ivory's The Guru*, 20th Century Fox. Former Director of the Film and Broadcasting Department, The Asia Society, and founder of the Media Advisory Committee of the Indo-US Sub-commission on Education and Culture. Pro bono activities include NY Women in Film (Board), Women in Film and TV International (Chair), First Pitch: The US-Manipur Baseball Project (Chair). Ms. Peters is an Indologist and baseball aficionado and President of Peters Productions, Inc.

Abigail E. Disney (Executive Producer) is a filmmaker, philanthropist and activist based in New York City. She has pursued a wide array of activities in support of peace and non-violence particularly by advocating for the advancement of women's roles in the public sphere. Her longtime passion for women's issues and peace-building led her to producing films. She has executive produced films that address various social issues, including *Family Affair*, *Playground*, *Sun Come Up* (Academy Award® Nominee 2011, Best Documentary Short), *Return*, *Invisible War* (Academy Award® Nominee 2012, Best Documentary Feature), *Open Heart* (Academy Award® Nominee 2012, Best Documentary Short) and is involved in several more films in various stages of development and production.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

People have asked what surprised me in making *THE ONLY REAL GAME*. Everything surprised me — from discovering that this beautiful and troubled state in northeast India even existed, to realizing that its sports loving people pursue their passion for baseball in the crossfire between armed government and insurgency forces.

I was surprised when I uncovered the 'missing link' that answers the question, "Why Baseball?" in this long isolated culture. Two WWII vets who served in the region in 1944-45 explain that mystery. After the Japanese destroyed the Burma Road, the US Army sent un-armed Air Cargo units to re-supply the Allies in China, across the Himalayas. When fliers weren't in the air they played baseball on landing strips hacked out of the wild terrain, as local kids looked on and took in The Great American Game.

And there were daily surprises dealing with the insurgency: unreliable communication, scant production resources, frequent power failures and blockades. I had to improvise all the time. I never felt in any personal danger, and worked without security. Together with my Manipuri crew we 'dropped down' into the lives of the film's central characters. Working unobtrusively, I built a narrative that flows from Manipuris' daily practice of quiet tenacity and resilience.

Most surprising of all was the discovery that women and girls are Manipur's 'power players' - both on the baseball field and as leaders of its peace and justice initiatives. Women are disproportionately victimized in Manipur by rape, violence and HIV/AIDs infection. They counter their vulnerability with courage and visibility. Individually they are powerless; united they make effective non-violent demands for their children's safety and for a fair stake in India's future. Baseball seems a safe haven, a way to keep kids away from trafficking and HIV. There's competition in baseball but it's not a war game, it's a peace game. And coaching promises future livelihoods — of great importance in a state with widespread unemployment.

I've remained close to my Manipuri crew and colleagues over a number of filming trips and the years it's taken to complete the film. We recently brought *THE ONLY REAL GAME* home to our crew and 'cast' of players, coaches, kids and parents who are the soul and substance of the film. I was determined to keep faith with Manipuris. The fact that they wholeheartedly embraced the film — their story — was a huge reward for me.

Manipur is a complicated place. There are no easy solutions, no pure black and white or right and wrong in the separatist conflict. Baseball — with its high stakes, its emphasis on the individual within the team — tests us all. I wanted to reveal why an ancient Asian culture fell in love with a come-lately American sport, and why Americans have much to learn from Manipuri grace under pressure. With all Manipur's problems, it's like anywhere in the world: shed light, bring attention, and things will change. That's why *THE ONLY REAL GAME* — for me — is a story worth telling.

SELECTED PRESS

New York Times

The history lesson is fascinating, and it's nice to see an American export other than a Hollywood blockbuster engendering good will.

– Neil Genzlinger

[Click here for full details](#)

Variety

Mirra Bank's surprising documentary, which discovers this most American of pastimes in the unlikelyst of places... Bank most profoundly links politics and sports through Manipuri women.

– Ronnie Scheib

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LA Times

Mirra Bank's warmhearted documentary... drops us into an oasis of play inside a region of hurt...there's enough honest grace to the obvious enjoyment this legendary sport gives people — whether struggling Manipuris or rejuvenated ex-pros — to make "The Only Real Game" a stirring ode to cultural bridge-building.

– Robert Abele

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Village Voice

Wholly absorbing! There's a lot of heartache, but they play for love... another work in the canon of baseball poetry.

– Daphne Howland – Critics' Pick

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Pulitzer Prize Juror & Media Critic for The New Yorker

What a masterful and extraordinary film. The wonders of the game of baseball, the dreams it arouses and the communities it creates-- burst through, generating tears of sorrow and joy.

– Ken Auletta

Newsweek

Play Ball or Die – Many of the women coaches were also mothers, and for them baseball can be a matter of life and death... it's a feel-good movie of another sort.

– Sean Elder

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New York Post

While Jon Hamm is busy looking for Indian baseball players in 'Million Dollar Arm,' filmmaker Mirra Bank has already found them!

– Reed Tucker

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The Lyons Den

Inspiring! One of the most unusual movies ever made about baseball. Unlike anything you've ever seen. This is a story which must be told. It combines baseball with human rights... and human dignity.

– Jeffrey Lyons

[Click here for full details](#)

Tom Verducci

Tremendous! This is a unique story about a pure love of the game. In particular the strength and wisdom of the women of Manipur is downright inspiring.

– SI Analyst, MLB Network & FOX

ELLE India

Game On! ...how the people of the troubled, isolated state of Manipur are connecting with the world through baseball.

– Anushka Mohite

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TECHNICAL SPECS

Running time: 82 minutes

Shooting format: HDV

Aspect ratio: 1:1.77

Sound: 5.1 Surround Sound and Lt Rt Stereo

Rating: Not Rated

Available screening formats: DCP, BluRay, HDCam, and DVD