

K O R S O



20-year-old Markus dreams about becoming a streetball star in New York and decides to put everything at stake in order to realise his dream. In the end, the dream takes this boy from the Korso suburb a lot further than he could ever imagine.

Directed by AKSELI TUOMIVAARA
Produced by BUFO & TUFFI FILMS

83min, Finland 2014

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"6620 KILOMETRES FROM NEW YORK"

20-year-old Markus dreams about becoming a streetball star in New York, but in reality he passes his time playing with his friends and hanging around the Korso suburb. His steady life takes a turn when his little sister Heta brings home her new boyfriend, Jojo, who is originally from Congo. Jojo is a self-assured sixth-former, who laughs at Markus' dream. Markus decides to somehow get the money to go to New York, and finally he puts himself and his friends at stake in order to prove that his dream is everything but stupid.

LONG SYNOPSIS

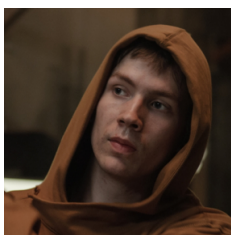
20-year-old Markus dreams about becoming a streetball star in New York, but in reality he passes his time playing with his friends and hanging around the Korso suburb. His steady life takes a turn when his little sister Heta brings home her new boyfriend, Jojo, who is originally from Congo.

The self-assured sixth-former Jojo threatens Markus' status as the only man in the family and laughs at his dreams. As Heta spends time with Jojo, she starts to see her brother with Jojo's eyes: as a loser, who has dropped out of school, got stuck in the suburb, and who cannot get a grip of his life. The sex noises coming from Heta's room certainly do not bring the siblings any closer.

In order to save his face, Markus ends up borrowing the travel money to New York from Murikka, a local crook. When the debts are due, Markus' trust in himself is put to the test. In the end, Markus puts himself and his friends at stake in order to prove that his dream is everything but stupid.

CHARACTERS & ACTORS

MARKUS, 20 (Mikko Neuvonen)



Markus is a young man who wants to get out of Korso. He has dropped out of school, his father lives with a new family in Sweden, and his mother has her own problems. The only thing Markus is passionate about and believes in is that he is good at basketball. He is encouraged by his friends Hartikainen and Vänä, but his little sister's boyfriend keeps questioning his dream. Nevertheless, he decides to pursue his dream and become a streetball star in New York.

Korso is **Mikko Neuvonen's** (born in 1990) second leading role in a feature film after he starred in *Miss Blue Jeans* in 2012. Neuvonen has also had leading roles in TV shows *Veljet* and *Maailmanparantaja* and various supporting roles in films including *Heart of a Lion* (2013), *A Patriotic Man* (2013), and *Protectors* (2008).

HARTIKAINEN, 19, a friend of Markus from Korso (Iiro Panula)



In contrast to Markus' pipe dreams, Hartikainen dreams about an ordinary life in Korso. He wants his own car, a job, and a house. His biggest dream is a lounge whose wall is covered with different kinds of beer cans. He has already collected 1257 cans. Hartikainen is helpful and good-hearted, and in the end, he has to pay a high price for

helping Markus go after his dream.

Iiro Panula (born in 1990) comes from Tampere and has acted in films *Last Cowboy Standing* (2009) and *The Home of Dark Butterflies* (2008). Panula is actively involved in theatre, both in production and on stage.

VÄNÄ, 19, a friend of Markus from Korso (Niko Vakkuri)



Vänä drinks, fucks up, and comes up with the stupidest ideas. He calls himself 'the Emperor of Korso' and loves to talk dirty – and does not quite understand when to stop. Vänä has a special interest: getting into girls' knickers.

Niko Vakkuri (born in 1988) has treaded the streets of Vantaa's suburbs for many years in real life as well. He is a self-taught actor known for his supporting roles in *The Home of Dark Butterflies* (2008) and *Heart of a Lion* (2013). He has also acted in the TV show *Veljet* (2008).

JOJO, 17, Heta's girlfriend (Richmond Ghansah)



Jojo, is a fashionable and self-assured sixth-former who starts dating Markus' little sister Heta. Jojo clashes with Markus and questions his basketball dream. Jojo has decided to become a famous film director when he grows up.

Richmond Ghansah (born in 1991) has a Nigerian-Ghanaian background but was born in Finland. He has acted in the Kassandra Theatre (*Antigone*, 2011) and in the Finnish National Opera (*Kung Karls Jakt*, 2007). He is also known to be actively involved in multicultural organisations and events.

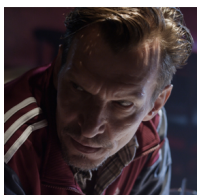
Korso is Ghansah's first feature film.

HETA, 16, Markus' little sister (Iida Lampela)



Heta is Markus' sharp-tongued little sister, who clashes with her brother every now and again. As Markus is bunking off vocational school and pursuing his dream, Heta is also torn about her future. She has a hard time choosing between the sixth-form and vocational school, even though Jojo makes her incline towards where the 'cool people' go, i.e. the sixth-form.

Heta's role is played by **Iida Lampela** (born in 1993), who has acted in productions such as the film *Dirty Bomb* (2011) and the TV show *Kimmo* (2012).



MURIKKA, Korso's local crook (Petri Manninen)

Murikka, according to his name which means a boulder, is a middle-aged and malicious man. He is a regular customer at Bar Sorento, a divorcé, and a father of one. Life has treated him poorly and made him bitter. Murikka promises to help Markus with his dream, but when it is time to pay the debts, things get ugly.

The actor **Petri Manninen** (born in 1965) has had a long career in the Finnish National Theatre. In addition, he has performed in several films and TV shows (including *Ambush*, 1999, and *Hella W*, 2011).

DIRECTOR AKSELI TUOMIVAARA



Akseli Tuomivaara (born 1979) has directed short films *Wakizashi* (2002), *Pure Life* (2004) as well as several award-winning music videos. During recent years he has directed promotional films as his main work. *Korso* is his first feature film and also his diploma work for the School of Motion Picture, Television and Production Design at the University of Art and Design Helsinki.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

The journey from Korso, Vantaa, Finland, to New York is long in many ways. In April the ground is still frozen in Finland, which makes playing street basketball difficult. For me, the central theme of this film is the pursuit of a dream that seems almost impossible. I want to give the audience a close look at Markus's journey, since, through his eyes, the impossible seems like the only sensible choice. What's even more interesting than achieving his dream is what happens to Markus as he chases it. Little by little, he opens up and starts to see that he is surrounded by possibilities rather than threats.

But more than anything, Korso is a story about conquering one's fears. The fear of failure is immense but in Markus's and his friends' minds, the fear of nothing happening is even greater. The film's title, Korso, is the name of their suburban hometown and is synonymous for a life where nothing happens. It drives our main character to a series of desperate acts and ultimately on the verge of a breakdown. But I believe—and want to show people with this film—that one right choice is enough to change the course of one's life for the better.

- Akseli Tuomivaara

A WORD FROM PRODUCER, ELLI TOIVONIEMI

It is not that long ago when our gang used to hang out at the malls of Pasila and Pihlajamäki, around recycling bins, and in forests. I remember how boring the suburbs were, and there was a constant, nagging feeling that somewhere else life was much more exciting. 'It's not worth even trying' could be read on every by-passer's face.

Then I heard that Jenni Toivoniemi and Kirsikka Saari had an idea for a film, Korso. I got excited and started thinking: is it really true that people coming from suburbs have a smaller chance of succeeding in life than others? A weird sense of suburban pride lifted its head in me when I realised this project was taking me back to those neighbourhoods I grew up in and those feelings I used to have. However, it took several years before the idea found the right makers and supporters who shared our belief that instead of a long and flashy jump, what is more important is the actual act of jumping; the attitude and the courage with which you go for the jump.

*After the development process of Korso had begun, we joined forces with the production company Bufo. Bufo and Tuffi had already co-operated a few years earlier in making the film *The Good Son*. When we found the best possible director for Korso, Akseli Tuomivaara, the casting process began. The process took a few years and was extremely important for the success of the film, but it was also very challenging. Mikko Neuvonen along with several other talented and committed young actors finally made the film real, genuine, and above all, their own.*

For many different reasons, it can be said that Korso was made by filmmakers of the new generation. This was the first feature film for the majority of the talented people in the crew, including the cameraman (Juice Huhtala) and the director. It has brought me an enormous amount of joy and happiness to be a part of a film that brought together the next generation of filmmakers while listening and respecting the young people's own voice.

PRODUCERS: BUFO & TUFFI FILMS

Korso has been produced by Misha Jaari and Mark Lwoff from production company Bufo and Elli Toivoniemi from Tuffi Films.

Founded in 2007 by producers **Misha Jaari**, **Mark Lwoff** and screenwriter **Vesa Virtanen**, Bufo has produced a number of fiction and documentary films of which many have received international recognition. Based in Helsinki, the ambitious and thrill-seeking company concentrates on plot-driven and meaningful stories that can also entertain big audiences. Bufo's films all share the elements of clear artistic vision, innovation and high quality.

Bufo has produced such films as *Concrete Night* (2013) by **Pirjo Honkasalo**, *The Good Son* (2011) by **Zaida Bergroth** and *The Interrogation* (2010) by **Jörn Donner**. Its films have been screened at renowned international film festivals such as Toronto and Moscow. Currently Bufo is involved in several feature film productions with acclaimed European directors such as **Veiko Õunpuu**. Furthermore, Bufo has been involved in a number of European co-productions, such as the 3D stop-motion feature *Lisa Limone* directed by **Mait Laas** and produced together with the Estonian Nuku Film, and *The Role* directed by **Konstantin Lopushansky** and produced together with the Russian Proline Film.

Tuffi Films was founded in 2010 by producer **Elli Toivoniemi**, writer-directors **Selma Vilhunen** and **Jenni Toivoniemi**, and screenwriter **Kirsikka Saari**. Their aim is to produce films that must be done. Films that challenge us. Stories that are worth telling. At Tuffi Films they believe that films which are true to themselves will find their audience and stand the test of time.

Tuffi Films' productions include Jenni Toivoniemi's short film *The Date*, which was awarded in Sundance, and Selma Vilhunen's short film *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?*, which has been nominated this year for an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film.

Elli Toivoniemi is the executive producer of Tuffi Films. She has worked in several film productions as an executive producer, casting agent, and assistant director. Toivoniemi graduated from Turku University of Applied sciences in 2009 and received The Upcoming Producer of the Year award in 2013 from the The Art and Cultural Professionals' Trade Union, Taku ry.

PRINCIPAL CREW

Director	Akseli Tuomivaara
Scriptwriters	Kirsikka Saari, Jenni Toivoniemi
Cinematography	Juice Huhtala
Production Designer	Antti Nikkinen
Costume Designer	Jouni Mervas
Make-up Designer	Pia Mikkonen
Editor	Jussi Rautaniemi
Sound Designer	Karri Niinivaara

Music Supervisor	Otso Kähönen
Music	Matti Pentikäinen
Producers	Misha Jaari, Mark Lwoff, Elli Toivoniemi
Produced by	Bufo Ltd, Tuffi Films
Associate Producer	CTM Pictures

TECHNICAL INFO

Original title	Korso
English title	Korso
Genre	Fiction/drama
Language	Finnish
Subtitles available in	English, Swedish
Running time	83 min
Country of production	Finland
Year of production	2014
Screening format	DCP
Frames per second	24
Shooting format	HD
Aspect ratio	2.39:1
Sound	5.1
Colour/black and white	Colour
Financier	Finnish Film Foundation
Broadcaster	Nelonen
Trailer	www.vimeo.com/82074355

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