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Friday May 13th, 2016: 7.30pm

## Jauja

(Argentina/Denmark 2014. Cert 15)

dir: Lisandro Alonso

starring: Viggo Mortensen, Villbjørk Malling Agger,  
Ghita Nørby

sponsor: Lincoln Print and Copy Centre

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Although at first glance *Jauja* seems largely plotless, with only a few major narrative moves, this impression is deceptive. In the film's striking opening tableau, every detail, however casual, will play a crucial role in what is to follow. In 19th-century Patagonia, Captain Dinesen is a Danish engineer on a quest to find Jauja, a mythical land of happiness and plenty: he sits in a stiff suit, facing away from us and leaning close to his daughter Ingeborg, who is turned towards the camera. Ingeborg speaks of her desire to own a dog - one that will follow her everywhere, that will live only for her. And what does Dinesen become, 30 minutes into the film, but precisely that, abandoning his mission in a heartbeat and blindly following her every trace.

This isn't simply a matter of director Lisandro Alonso using, across several moments of his film, a pointed dramatic metaphor or flagging up an ironic analogy. For there will be other, real dogs glimpsed on screen - one of which leads Dinesen to a cave where (in a beguiling rhyme with Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*) lives a woman who might well be the elderly incarnation of his daughter - and there is even another Ingeborg, now rechristened Villbjørk (also the first name of the actress playing her), shown as a character in contemporary times. One of Villbjørk's dogs, it transpires, has a nasty 'nervous ailment' - brought on by the fact that its young mistress disappears for long stretches of time.

The film takes shape within the poetic flux of these strange, inscrutable shifts and metamorphoses. In what is a bold step in his career, Alonso (*La libertad*, *Liverpool*) reaches well beyond the neo-realism often associated with the Slow Cinema movement, to shape (with co-writer Fabian Casas, a poet and novelist) an elusive, dream-like amalgam of diverse times, levels and encounters. While still deploying the steady, dispassionate, contemplative camera-eye (and microphone-ear) of his earlier work, Alonso takes *Jauja* more in the direction of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's films, or Miguel Gomes's celebrated *Tabu* (2012 - shown by LFS in November 2013) - a type of cinema in which the materiality of landscapes and political histories is melded with the magical, transformative elements of fairytale and myth.

Alonso has developed his art and craft where certain of his contemporaries, such as Lav Diaz, have not. *Jauja* is a film that (in David Lynch's useful expression) really "works the frame" - and what a captivatingly rare 1:1.33 ratio that frame is, with its rounded, unmatted corners. Departing far from naturalism, Alonso's *mise en scène* systematically deploys large intervals of distance between his 'figures in the landscape' or, inversely, comically jams them altogether in one static set-up; with Aki Kaurismäki's cinematographer Timo Salminen, he explores a rich, intoxicating colour palette and even the conventional 'match-cut on action' becomes - in the extreme way it is arranged here - like a rude bump from one world into another.

It's easy to be misled by *Jauja*'s opening intertitle text, which suggests a robust, epic tale of male adventurers searching for a New World - and losing their way, as all explorers of an impossible Utopia tend to do. But this is no return to *Aguirre: Wrath of God* (1972) territory. Alonso ruthlessly - and often humorously - minimises the traditional panoply of explorer tales: there are no perilous sea voyages, no treks up steep mountains, and hardly a single discernible



scrape with the indigenous people of the region - those "coconut heads" who Dinesen's colleague Pittaluga advises must be entirely exterminated. Indeed, Alonso's staging of specific, sparse, incongruous configurations of nature and technological culture - such as the sight of a man in a vast field clumsily wielding a surveying instrument - recalls moments in Terence Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978), where colourful details of 'period costume' and historical props played a similarly excessive, sticking-out-like-a-sore-thumb role. The Argentinian critic Quintin has, in this light, pointed to the large, complex, off-screen spaces of *Jauja*; a conflicted sense of national identity torn between romantic, nostalgic longing for the figure of the gaucho and a no less intense cultivation of European culture and manners (a tension we amply see for example in Jorge Luis Borge's writings.)

**Synopsis:** Patagonia, late 19th century. Captain Dinesen is a Danish engineer who, with a small band of men (Pittaluga, Birrita, Angel and Corto) is searching for Jauja, a mythological land of abundance and happiness. In particular, the men are looking for any trace of the renegade Colonel Zulunga, now said to be a roaming bandit dressed in women's clothing. Dinesen is fiercely protective of his teenage daughter Ingeborg: they share a tent, and he keeps her separate from the others as much as possible. Ingeborg has, however, initiated an affair with Corto, and together they flee into the wild. Dinesen abandons the quest for Jauja and searches for Ingeborg. In his travels he finds an unidentified mutilated corpse and then a dying Corto - both victims of Zulunga, who has taken Ingeborg captive. Dinesen is shot at. He eventually comes upon an elderly woman in a cave, who lives proudly with her dogs and speaks of her youthful dream of escaping society and going into the desert. She hands Dinesen a compass that Ingeborg earlier took from the explorers' camp.

Denmark, present day. Villbjørk, who is identical to Ingeborg, awakens in a castle. She converses with a man who looks after her dogs, one of which is neurotically injuring itself. She finds a toy soldier, glimpsed earlier in the film, and discards it in a pool of water. We see, one last time, the landscape of the past.

### Credits

<b>Dinesen</b>	Viggo Mortensen	<b>Director</b>	Lisandro Alonso
<b>Ingeborg/Villbjørk</b>	Villbjørk Malling Agger	<b>Screenplay</b>	Fabian Casas Lisandro Alonso
<b>Woman in cave</b>	Ghita Nørby	<b>DoP</b>	Timo Salminen
<b>Pittaluga</b>	Adrian Fondari	<b>Editors</b>	Natalia Lopez Gonzalo del Val Sebastian Rosés
<b>Angel</b>	Esteban Bigliardi	<b>Art</b>	
<b>Corto</b>	Diego Roman	<b>Direction</b>	
<b>Birrita</b>	Mariano Arce	<b>Music</b>	Viggo Mortensen
<b>Indian</b>	Misael Savedra	<b>Sound</b>	Catriel Vildosola
<b>Col. Zulunga</b>	Gabriel Marquez	<b>Costume</b>	Gabriela Aurora Fernandez
<b>Dog man</b>	Brian Patterson		

Argentina/Denmark/USA/Mexico, France, the Netherlands/  
Germany/Brazil 2014 109 mins

Fourteen years ago, at the moment of his debut feature, Alonso was the furthest thing imaginable from a 'cinophile filmmaker' like Gomes or Leos Carax - I vividly remember his anger at critics who endlessly compared his style with that of Chantal Akerman, whose films, at that time, he had not even seen, let alone chosen to emulate. Although he has doubtless imbibed his fair share of international film culture in the period since, Alonso remains a director not given to the postmodern 'mannerist' affection for specific filmic quotations or pastiches. Notwithstanding this fact, *Jauja* enters into an extremely rich, flowing, unforced dialogue with certain key forms and traditions in cinema history.

For example, there is the western genre - especially in its best known, American variety. Dinesen's obsessive hunt for his daughter cannot help but recall the quest of Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) to find young Debbie (Natalie Wood), in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). Many critics have compared Alonso's picturing of the Patagonian landscape to John Ford's images of Monument Valley and the like. But, beyond surface plot and setting, Alonso takes us here to the core of the western (and indeed, of *The Searchers*), no matter where it plays or how it is recreated: *Jauja* explores the thin veneer of a civilisation yet to be solidified, a civilisation that is little more than the ambiguous flux of animal and human, tame and savage, the desired and the repressed. Hence, the hint of incestuous feeling between father and daughter (incest was already a topic hovering over *Liverpool*) - a feeling imperfectly 'contained' by morality or law, and hence, feeding (or devouring, to use a recurrent word here) all reality with its force of fantasy. For all its evocation of the 'classical' western, *Jauja* also at moments, conjures a chilled out Alejandro Jodorowski - less obviously surrealistic but no less provocative in its core propositions.

The casting of Viggo Mortensen is especially apt on this level. Apart from the subtle skill he brings to the project - setting his character apart from the rest through a small scale set of nervy, histrionic tics and glances - he also embodies, in cinematic memory, a fascinating series of western or quasi-western hero/antihero figures from films such as the underrated *Hidalgo* (2004) and Ed Harris's *Appaloosa* (2008) through to his richly ambiguous role in Cronenberg's *A History of Violence* (2005), another film that echoes, in key details, *The Searchers*.

What is most remarkable in *Jauja*, however, is the way it engineers a slow swerve away from an initially, even oppressively - male genre cluster (adventure plus western) to become wholly, finally, the vivid phantasm of a young girl (and hence, something akin to surreal, Buñuelian melodrama), like Valeria Sarmiento's *Our Marriage* (1984). In the ultimate shift from past to present, and from dream to reality, Alonso is not presenting us with a narrative puzzle to be clarified, solved and thus swiftly exhausted by its viewers. Although comparisons as diverse as De Palma's *Femme Fatale* (2002), Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006) and Teresa Villaverde's *Transe* (2006) will spring to a cinophilic mind, *Jauja* is closer to the militantly unsolvable riddle of Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* (1967) - another film about a precarious civilisation with a dark, ever-living undertow of barbaric myth. When Alonso or Pasolini starkly cut or dissolve between different planes of historical time and society, they are not groping for banal 'explanations' of a storytelling mystery; it is their way of excavating, ever deeper, the enigmas of reality.

## Programme news

The following films (in alphabetical order) have been selected (subject to confirmation) for our 2016-17 season.

<b>Attila Marcel</b> (France 2014)	<b>Men and Chicken</b> (Denmark 2015)
<b>Bande à Part</b> (France 1964)	<b>Mustang</b> (Turkey/France/Qatar/Germany 2015)
<b>The Brand New Testament</b> (Belgium/France/Luxembourg 2015)	<b>Our Little Sister</b> (Japan 2015)
<b>The Commune</b> (Denmark 2016)	<b>The Pearl Button</b> (Chile 2015)
<b>Dheepan</b> (France 2015)	<b>Rams</b> (Iceland 2015)
<b>Embrace of the Serpent</b> (Colombia/Argentina/Venezuela 2015)	<b>Sherpa</b> (Australia/UK 2015)
<b>Grandma</b> (USA, 2015).	<b>Son of Saul</b> (Hungary 2015)
<b>Little Men</b> (USA/Greece 2016)	<b>Tale of Tales</b> (UK/France/Italy 2015)
<b>The Lobster</b> (UK 2015)	<b>Tangerine</b> (USA 2015)
<b>Love and Friendship</b> (USA 2016)	<b>Truman</b> (Argentina/Spain 2015)
<b>Maggie's Plan</b> (USA 2016)	<b>Victoria</b> (Germany 2015)
	<b>A War</b> (Denmark 2015)

As in previous years, 3 additional films will be chosen from those released during the summer and autumn. Dates for the season are as follows:

<b>Sept:</b> 16, 23	<b>Nov:</b> 4, 11, 18, 25	<b>Mar:</b> 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
<b>Oct:</b> 14, 21, 28	<b>Jan:</b> 6, 13, 20, 27	<b>Apr:</b> 7, 21, 28
	<b>Feb:</b> 3, 17, 24	<b>May:</b> 5, 12

If you are interested in sponsoring any of these films, please let a committee member know. Rates are

1 film - £50      2 films - £90      3 films - £120.

Additional films can be sponsored at £30 per title.

We aim to release the final programme in print & online in June.

### On The Record

In keeping with the summer seasons of recent years, we have organised a short programme of 6 music documentaries between June 10th and June 22nd. Details of the films are below.

**Muscle Shoals (USA 2013. 111 mins. Cert PG). showing on June 10 at The Venue (7.30pm)**

A film that pays tribute to the prestigious recording studios in a small Alabama town, featuring the likes of Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge.

**The Possibilities are Endless (UK 2014. 83 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 12 at The Collection (2pm)**

Recovering from a stroke, Formner Orange Juice front man Edwyn Collins reflects on his childhood and the positive power of music.

**Marley (UK/USA 2012. 142 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 15 at The EMMTEC (7pm)**

In Kevin MacDonald's much-praised documentary, the music of the legendary Bob Marley is extensively showcased and the important themes of his life eloquently portrayed.

**Mistaken for Strangers (USA 2014. 75 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 17 at The EMMTEC (7pm)**

Tom Berninger chronicles his time spent on the road as a member of the tour crew for The National, the rock and roll band fronted by his brother, Matt.

**20 Feet from Stardom (USA 2013. 89 mins. Cert 12): showing on June 19 at The Collection (2pm)**

In this documentary, the spotlight is turned from the stars onto their talented but unheralded backing singers.

**Orion: The Man who would be King (UK/USA. 2015. 86 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 22 at The EMMTEC (7pm)**

The bizarre story of Jimmy Ellis, aka Orion, a masked singer who impersonated Elvis in the years following the star's death

**NB: The film will be introduced by the director Jeanie Finlay and will be followed by a Q & A.**

Tickets for each film (£5/£4 concs) will be available on the door.

### Our next screening - May 27th, 7.30pm

#### The Wolfpack (USA 2014. Cert 15)

In New York, the six Angulo brothers and their older sister live with their parents in a Lower East Side apartment that they are not allowed to leave because their parents feel the world beyond is unsafe. Home-schooled, they go outside only once or twice a year under strict supervision. Film is their shared passion and, unable to explore the world themselves, they do so via the medium of cinema, making endless lists of films, staging elaborate recreations of their favourites scenes and memorising dialogue. Their inexperience of the world is so profound that when they finally start to get a taste of freedom, the expectations they've built up through film-watching don't always translate to reality; but they are nevertheless determined to escape the prison their father has constructed and leave their inner worlds for the real one.

Director Crystal Moselle's film, reminiscent of Andrew Jarecki's *Capturing the Friedmans*, shows a profoundly intense family dynamic, a portrait of familial dysfunction which is astonishing, haunting and very moving. It won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2015.