

EDITORIAL

The Journal of Anthropological Film (JAF) has just launched its fourth issue. In the two years since it was established we've learned a lot about the practical challenges of producing a one-of-a-kind, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to anthropological films. JAF's mission is to publish films that stand alone as original academic contributions to anthropology and ethnographic film.

JAF is a new creation, the first peer-reviewed journal exclusively for film. We encourage submissions representing a range of styles and approaches, from traditional ethnographic to experimental, from recently produced films to older productions. Establishing criteria that encompasses this wide range is challenging. Criteria that is too narrow can discourage innovative and experimental work. Too broad and the quality of submissions can vary greatly. A more difficult task is to address the disparity between high and low budget films (and more often no-budget films), their unequal access to production and post-production services and how that impacts opportunity and public exposure. Selecting films clearly involves a degree of subjectivity – it's always the other side of the coin. We seek work that contributes to anthropological knowledge and that demonstrates a high level of cinema craft. Therefore, the bar is set high for both. Coming up with submission criteria that attracts the best work has been an ongoing challenge and something we will continue to address and refine.

JAF is an open-access platform, making reviewed films available for public viewing without cost. This is central to the journal's raison d'être. To date we have only been able to consider films not bound by distribution restrictions. We hope to address this in the future so that unrepresented and distributed films alike can be considered for review and publication. We are looking at including a "reader's comments" section in future issues so that users of the JAF website will have the opportunity to see published films, comment on reviews, read filmmaker's responses and the thoughts of other readers.

JAF is a work in progress. As the first peer-reviewed journal exclusively for film, we are aiming at developing a new way to evaluate and celebrate academic excellence in anthropology and ethnographic film. Development and growth of the journal requires conversation, debate and input from readers and contributors. We welcome your comments on the journal thus far and suggestions on what it might become in the future.

In this issue we present four films:

Eliamani's Homestead, a film by Vanessa Wijngaarden, 20 minutes

In a one-take, unedited sequence, *Eliamani's Homestead* documents an uncomfortable encounter between a group of Maasai women and a family of Dutch tourists who arrive at the Maasai homestead on a "cultural heritage" visit. The Maasai women want to sell their craft jewelry, the tourists want to take photographs. No one seems to know how to navigate the cross-cultural impasse or communicate their expectations. Misperception, miscommunication and misunderstanding define this awkward interaction. A central focus of the film is the shifting power relationship between the Maasai women and the tourists.

Da Hillsook Wedeen, a film by Hope Stickland, 16 minutes - Based on an historical event and shaped over time by culture, myth and the stories passed down by people of the Shetland Islands, *De Hilsook Wedeen* bridges time and history through a young Shetland woman's emotional telling of a story about a group of local fisherman lost in a sudden storm in 1881. In this telling the past is made part of the present through the complex weave of voice, wind, coastal views, longing and loss. It is about the past but also about how stories and historical trauma shape the identity of Shetland people today.

Firekeepers, a film by Rosella Ragazzi and Britt Kramvik, 58 minutes. The film follows two Sami musicians, Lawra Somby and Sara Marielle Gaup, and the Sami people in their sphere as they endeavor to reproduce and personalize the *yoik*, a particular musical and lyrical form traditionally performed by Sami people. Most any personal experience, animal, landscape or object can be the subject of a yoik. Therefore it is the perfect form to express the singular individual and collective experiences of Sami people.

Afar – The Go-Between, a film by Frode Storaas, Rolf Scott, and Getachew Kassa, 37 minutes. This carefully observed portrait of the Islamic pastoral Afars in eastern Ethiopia, focuses on Hussein Hayie, a Peace and Security officer whose job is to judge whether local incidents should be handled by the police or solved by clan elders. Early in the film, a woman is reported killed. The film follows Hussein in town discussing the incident with other leaders and visiting his extended family in nomadic camps. We gain an understanding of how the political system works and its emphasis on the peaceful resolution of conflict. But the real value of this film comes from its rich ethnographic detail and its multi-dimensional, insiders view of the Afar.

Editor's note: We are happy to announce that filmmaker and professor Leonard Kamerling, from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, has joined the JAF editorial committee.