



JIM JARMUSCH INTERVIEW  
*FRAGMENTS OF PARADISE*  
LIFE STORIES

**Jim Jarmusch, Filmmaker**  
**August 24, 2021**  
**Interviewed by Katie Davison**  
**Total Running Time: 51 minutes and 8 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Life Stories Presents  
Jim Jarmusch  
Filmmaker

00:00:07:00

CREW:

Be. Am I in? Yeah, yeah. Jim Jarmusch, you, seen one Mark.

00:00:19:00

KATIE DAVISON:

So, hardest question of all. Who are you?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Who am I? My name's Jim Jarmusch. I make films and music and, I write and do various other things. I'm a big fan of cinema. Of all forms, of course. Movies, films, whatever.



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KATIE DAVISON:

Okay, so for people who don't know, do you say Jonas Mekas or Amicus? And for what? Yeah. That first.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I've always heard both, but I've always said Jonas Amicus, but I'm not sure which is correct.

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KATIE DAVISON:

For people who don't know who he is. Who was he to you?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Oh, wow. Well, he was a kind of instigator. He was someone I learned a lot from, in so many ways about art and movies and mostly about the possibilities of things. I love the Jonas. You know, originally they would call these kind of films that he heralded underground films or avant garde films, but in the end, I think Jonas preferred experimental films because it implied the idea of possibilities and of experiments and of nothing ever being set or necessarily attained. So yeah, he was just a big inspiration to me in so many ways. So busy all the time. The things he did as an archivist, the things he did as a filmmaker and an artist, things that he was interested in. I used to talk to him a lot about other forms, especially writing and poetry and, you know, just



his kind of, I don't know, his enthusiasm at discovering new things any day was just remarkable to me. So, yeah, big inspiration to me. Always. I consider myself in a way. I know it's derogatory on some level. But I consider myself kind of a dilettante in that I. There are too many things in the world to just focus on 1 or 2 of them. So I write, I take in things from many, many sources and forms and subjects. And, that was also always kind of fueled and inspired also by Jonas.

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KATIE DAVISON:

I've heard you talk about being a self-proclaimed militant and why that's so important to filmmaking, and it reminds me so much of Jonas. Can you talk a little bit about why that's important?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

For me, I'm maybe a little more formally aware, than Jonas's work. But for me, cinema or movies, they contain. And I've said this a lot. They contain all the other forms of expression, writing and style and composition and photography and acting and, you know, music and movement and all these things are within films. And Jonas, it was even wider than that because his interests were in all different ways that people express themselves. So there's something very interesting about where the art world and sort of the film industry is very blurred for Jonas, you know, he was more interested in art and expression, and the financial side of things were a kind of annoyance to him, but he was always aware of them. There's a beautiful letter in one of the books of his collected writings and interviews, a letter that he wrote to the



tax authorities in New York in the 50s. I think that I love so much asking for a tax break, you know, but, yeah, he it was very wide. That kind of inspiration for him of coming from all different, different directions and all that. And also he was very aware of having like antenna of being a receptor. So he also always inspired me to appreciate all the, the details of things and not just look at the most obviously dramatic thing, but look at the details and of course, the possibilities.

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KATIE DAVISON:

He often said in interviews, like one thing that was so special about the 50s and 60s was that, like, money wasn't driving the creative. It didn't seem to be a part of the community. Do you think that that's changed today?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I don't know, as I kind of as I get older and I've done this for a long time now, I kind of step more and more aside from the from analyzing the market, you know, but I have to rely on it so far still, annoyingly, to produce my films, you know? So that is annoying. But I would say the marketing factor is become more and more prominent. But I also think that, you know, planet Earth is in the midst of like the suicide machine of capitalism that I also talked with Jonas about over the years. You know, so that's something we can't control anymore as individuals because, I don't know, the overlords have too much control and people are too much rewarded by money. But for Jonas, that was never you know, he wasn't particularly a political fighter against that one thing of like, you know, the the toxicity of capitalism. But he was obviously



extremely aware of it. And he was found his own kind of path. Aside from all that, what he considered nonsense, mostly he was more interested in humans and natural things and things that were that express things to you that, just the experience of being alive. I think Jonas really appreciated his consciousness so much. And, and other people, too, and what they were doing. So. There's that. And then also, I've always been really, inspired by artists like Joan or Sir Robert Frank or people who don't look at a kind of they're not looking for something that is their success. Like they're not interested in a kind of signpost that tells you what their work means. They're interested in the next thing they're going to do. So they're interested in the process. Not not the example so much. And Jonas definitely was of that, you know, philosophy for sure.

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KATIE DAVISON:

Do you remember the first time you heard about him?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I went to Anthology Film Archives when it was on Wooster Street. That he and Kobilka, I guess, designed, so I never went previous to that. I don't think I was in New York when it was at Joseph Papp, but I used to go to a few times to Wooster Street. I lived way uptown, at the time, but I came down and explored it a few times. And then from then on, you know, I was aware of Jonah's writing in The Village Voice and, and then I became a fan of Anthology Film Archives and just kind of followed it, and especially when it came here, became really exciting to me that Jonah's head is really his own world. Now.



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KATIE DAVISON:

Do you remember reading those articles in the Voice? Like, did it do do you remember the writing style or how it felt?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I remember a kind of exuberance for, you know, for Harry Smith and Jack Smith and my a Darren. And, you know, I remember these things that were sort of treated as avant garde, as sort of outside the mainstream. And I remember that kind of, exuberance, I guess that was, you know, that was inspiring for sure.

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KATIE DAVISON:

At that point in the 70s, he had had, or in the there had already been like the Flaming Creatures case and sort of things like this made him sort of, you know, give him a little bit of notoriety. Were you aware of those things? I heard you were a fan of Jack Smith.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I was aware of those things, and I was aware that Jonah had been in, you know, trouble with the law for, Sean Dunmore and for Flaming Creatures. So that made him a kind of kind of heroic, even though that was back in the 60s, I think. But I, I was aware of that. And, you know, that kind of Jonah's being



also a criminal, in a way, it was made him even more kind of admirable to me. So, yeah, he was always a kind of mythic figure in a way, but not mythic, because he was there walking around and you could see him and find him and and talk to him. So. But yeah, I liked very much that he fought against the authorities. You know.

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KATIE DAVISON:

You spent some time at the Cinematheque and and Paris at a point. In some ways, it's like Jonah's whole life was about creating spaces for these works to be seen. And I think we forget now how important that was at the time. So I wonder, was that really important, informative for you as a filmmaker? Going to see works like that at places like the Cinematheque?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Yes. So much because, you know, now we take for granted that we can, you know, I say sort of, flippantly that my, my drug of choice recently is the, Criterion Film Channel, you know, but people don't realize that back then, if you were going to see a certain film by Jack Smith or by Sean Eustache or whoever you would see when it was playing, like several months from now, you would mark that time, you would get your friends that were interested, aware of this, and you would see that film on that date because you didn't know if you would ever be able to see that film again, or if it would come back in ten years, five years. So these things became events in a way for us. And, so, yeah, Jonas was like sort of, he was the captain of a very important pirate ship, you know, which was anthology or all the things that he, he attracted. So



he was kind of a. Yeah, he was an important kind of pirate king to me. I also have referred to him as being, the kind of poetic equivalent of a kung fu master to because of his ability to take in, like, I've studied some martial arts, and I, I do think maybe and I want to talk with Chinese about this. That may be the secret of the universe is don't go against the grain. Like learn how to learn how things flow and don't have to hit. Against them. But although he did, when it's necessary, you know, as a kind of fighter, but in general, the flow of energy and of life and expression ideas is something very mysterious and magical. But, man, I just completely forgot what that train of thought was. I don't know what where where that came from. Kung fu Master Jonas was very interested in the blending of forms always. You know, he didn't like categorizing things. So was he a diarist? Was he a documentary filmmaker? Was he an experimental filmmaker? Was he a poet of cinema, which is way overused? He he was all those things. And and calling them a poet is also important to me because, he it's a it is a very overused thing. But Jonas was able to use the form of cinema in a way, in the way poets don't obey the laws of prose. They don't obey the laws or rules of certain literary structures. They are there to abstract them so that Jonas loved that. And he loved that in poetry. And he loved the idea that you could abstract and fragment language, and the language of, images and sound could be also those rules could be ignored and you could find your own structure like a poet, you know? So he really was, very poetic with that form. And again, you know, it's a cliché to say that, but in his case, that kind of blending and bending of rules and disregard for categories. He was very energized about that. You know, his I think his last book, *A dance with Fred Astaire*, is a beautiful book, too, as a book, because. Yeah, okay. It's a physical object. It's a book. What is a book? So what is this book and the other books of collecting? Jonas's ideas are similar. There isn't a





category really to define them because they're essays, they're interviews, there's images, there's photographs, there's poetry, there's drawings. There's things out of the newspaper. There is, you know, all of these things. It's open to all of them. So that I love that book. But I have a lot of books of Jonas. So I love collecting all of his writings, the ones from the 50s and 60s. That's one of my current favorites. I like to just pick it up and read. Okay, well, what did Jonas discuss with puzzling he or Susan Sontag or John and Yoko or, you know, so yeah.

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KATIE DAVISON:

The diary form is interesting because I think we've gotten so used to sort of the personal and some that we forget that it was radical about a point, you know, when people like him were discovering it. Did you ever talk to him about that or have any ideas or thoughts on his diary Diaristic sensibilities?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Yeah, I never talked to him specifically about that, that I can remember. But, you know, now with kind of. Corporate overlords. The, the kind of documentary or even diary becomes something much more appreciated, as you know, being truthful in some way. I know films not truthful in any way, really, but, you know, it's all it's constructed, but it it has changed very much how we see those things and now even documentary films. I'm more interested in the ones that I would, I would refer to more as essays than documentaries, in a way, because that's also an open form. But it's true that there was, I wouldn't say revolutionary, but they were not, you know, this



kind of personal diary essay. Things were not really greatly appreciated, but certainly not by the mainstream.

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KATIE DAVISON:

And then beginning, you call them film poems. And, maybe it's it's cliché to you, but I don't know. I wonder if you can if you think that that's a good way to describe avant garde cinema.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

You know, I think it depends on the creator. Just because style is so important and how people use things, you know? Certainly in Jonas's case, that was appropriate, because he and he was really interested in poetry as a form, you know, literary form. But yeah, I don't know, I'm very bad with trying to put labels on things. I don't know. To me, that's all waves in the ocean that sometimes connect with other waves and then break apart. And when you start numbering and identifying the waves, it just gets too confusing to me. I just think it as, an ocean of expression of humans, you know, and movies. It's a huge, beautiful ocean and extremely varied.

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KATIE DAVISON:

You wouldn't say that there was a specific influence of the experimental film at the 50s and 60s on independent film in the 70s and 80s.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I don't know how to answer that for me. I can only answer personally. And again, I have a very wide scope because I have been inspired by people like Jonas, and poets that I studied with, like Kenneth Coke and David Shapiro, that are extremely important to me. Ron Patchett and Anne Waldman and friends of mine that are poets, you know. So, yeah, I don't really know how to answer that. For me personally, I have a very wide scope, so I deeply love silent cinema from Hollywood and from around the world. I love, classic Hollywood films, of course, but then I love experimental films from the US and Europe and all around the world. But I love the history of Japanese cinema and Iranian cinema and Indian cinema. So, you know, it's hard for me to I don't like, I like, I don't like the categories of like low brow, high brow, you know, this is academic. This is just mass audience pop culture. I don't care, you know, if they are moving. I don't care if it's like a Shaw Brothers martial arts film or if it's, film of carousel, you know?

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KATIE DAVISON:

Were there any specific avant garde films that you remember seeing? Early on?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Yes, I remember seeing a number of of Michael Snow's films that I found very moving. And then I would see opposite films like Stan Brakhage, I mean, opposite stylistically and the kind of. Arranged between them. I found really, kind of exciting, you know? I think, I, I think I found out about Maya Darren



through anthology and and through Jones and and way back in the late 70s, whose approach to filmmaking is very interesting to me. Jack Smith, I, I'm a big fan of Chuck Smith. When I used to be in a band in the early 80s, he sometimes came to our shows, and I, I used to see him on the street, and one time he was gathering things in his, like, baby carriage for possible theatrical props. And he gave me his business card, which I still have, which said, says Jack Smith, exotic theatrical genius. And then that's his address and phone number. And I got Allen Ginsberg's business card. I got a few great business cards from these. These guys like real businessmen, you know, Jack Smith. But yeah, I just like the variety of expression. So, yeah, it's hard for me to pinpoint certain films, really. But wavelength, I believe. Michael Snow it was so meditative and minimal that it was a kind of trance film for me. And I think at the time I saw it, I was discovering trance music from West Africa and Asia, and I don't know, somehow that one that really spoke to me. So it led me to look for more films of his and then other people that maybe Jonas would program around them. And then, I don't know, I just kind of trying to absorb things.

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KATIE DAVISON:

Did you ever see any of Jonas' films?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Yes, I did. I mean, Walden was the first one that really. Moved me. You know, it's like, wow, this is like its own form. Completely. His film lost, lost, lost. I really affected me a lot when I saw it was like, a big experience. But man, how



many films did Jonas make? If and you know, it's very hard to keep track of them. Outtakes from The Life of a Happy Man. It's a brilliant film. I've shown us. It's. But, I mean, there are too many things I don't know.

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KATIE DAVISON:

In his work, he kind of. He has this, he almost celebrates the mundane and this way that I find really profound. And I. And I see that a little bit in your own work. Did you resonate with some of those themes?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Not in a conscious way, but most certainly, you know, they remind me of, you know, Neruda wrote a lot of poems, like ode to My Socks or to very mundane, simple things. I remember reading many years ago in one of Jonas's like, diaries, a little piece, and I don't remember where it was, but it was about putting on his shoes and looking down at them and thinking about the shoes and where they'd been before, actually putting them on his feet and starting his day. So it was a very, very mundane thing about his shoes, you know, so this whole idea of appreciating details, that's very important to me. You know, I sort of started off talking in this little interview, talking about Jonas, this appreciation of of details. So it's, you know, daily life is not dramatic or inherently hierarchical as to what are the priorities or what will happen to you in a day so that all of those things, I don't know, Jonas, just kind of represents a lot of those things for me.

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KATIE DAVISON:

I wonder if you have any insight, like there's a little bit of a melancholy, and Jonas is writing and in his films, but in his life, it's seemed to be all joy. Do you have any thoughts on that?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I like in his work that there is a darkness sometimes and a melancholy, and then there's always some kind of humor or some there's a, there's humor threaded through and even a kind of. Appreciation of absurdity, of daily life. You know. But yeah. No, I don't know, because the times I did get to hang out with Jonas were usually either I was seeking him out and seeing if I could hang out with him for a little while, or I would run into them, him, and then try to stay with him for a while and encouraged by him, you know. So, yeah. Come with me. I'm going to have wine. Let's go now, you know, so, they were like little incidents of, I don't know, inspiration for me. So, you know, I didn't really know what to talk to him about often. I just see what would happen.

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KATIE DAVISON:

Do you remember the first time? Like, you actually got to sit down and hang out with him?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

No, but I do remember a few times. Where? Here. Here it was before I met him. Before this, he even had this anthology of and had this building. But.



Yeah, I got to talk to him once when he was with Robert Frank way back. But I remember a number of times, I'd love to come here and see if I could catch him and go downstairs and just hang out in the office, or talk to him about new things in the archives. And I remember things he'd tell me like, oh, we found these Russian industrial films in the dumpster that I now want to catalog. Like this excitement of, like, what are they? Oh, they're footage of strange machinery in factories in the Soviet Union, you know, these kind of things. And and we just found them. They had been thrown away. So we're seeing should we include them in the archive, you know, and other, you know, recent films he was archiving was always interesting to me. But, you know, the tangents that he would go on again would maybe veer into the mundane or places you wouldn't expect. Like one thing that really made me love Jones as a person was when he remember when Britney Spears kind of went crazy and shaved her head and all that. And I don't know if anyone's talked about this, but Jonas, made us a very, you know. Definitive statement in defense of Britney Spears at this time and Britney Spears, really, she represented mainstream culture completely. You know, she was not avant garde. Although now looking back, we see Britney Spears is important in pop music and is can be reevaluated in a way. But, Jonas was like, look, this person is an artist. Whether you like their art or not, they have the pressure of that of what they create and express, and this person works very hard at it, and she is now being assaulted by everything around her, you know, publicity and just the corporate media world. And that pressure has caused a kind of breakdown for her. And he said, I have only like sympathy for her, for I say I have only support for for Britney Spears. And that seemed kind of antithetical, you know, for, for Jonas at that time, the godfather of avant garde, you know,



sticking up for the this mainstream pop icon. But it was a really good insight into him for me.

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KATIE DAVISON:

How did you end up? Didn't you shoot a scene from Coffee and Cigarettes here? And I remember.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I did, yes, my very the very first one I made was, actually Saturday Night Live asked me, would you make a five minute film for Saturday Night Live to be shown in five minutes? No commercial break, no interruption. And I said, well, yeah, what what do I need to know? And they said, well, five minutes and funny. And then we like your style. So whatever you think, you know. So, my friends, Roberto Benigni from Italy was in New York at that time, and Steven Wright was around as a friend. And I just thought, oh my God. Let's see if I can get Steven and Roberto, and we'll just make something up and we'll shoot it. And then they were just, preparing this building that was in progress, you know, they were redoing the whole interior. And Jonas and I asked Jonas if I could maybe shoot there, or was it disruptive if we shot there? And he said, oh, no, you can shoot here. I hope it's not disruptive that they'll be working around you, you know, but we can quiet them down for, you know, for when you shoot. So. Yeah, I got to shoot kind of on the landing, of the staircase. I think it was. Or maybe downstairs. I can't quite remember, but. Yeah, he let us shoot here, and we we just kind of played around. We had a little kind of a script, and, it was just playful. But it was really nice that I





wasn't quite sure where to shoot. And Jonas right away said, oh, yeah, shoot here. You can shoot here. That was 1980. Six maybe, I think 86. Then they ran it on Saturday Night Live, and then I thought, oh, I was shooting a film later in Memphis. Mystery Train. So I made a second one with, Sankey and Joie Lee, and and Steve Buscemi. So we shot another one, and then I'd shoot another. I shot one with Tom Waits and Iggy Pop, and I just started sort of collecting them for a while. But that was the first one. Yeah.

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KATIE DAVISON:

Why is Anthology important as an institution?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Well, it's getting more and more rare to go and see interesting films that aren't mainstream films and, you know, like to we've been losing venues now and anthology is important because in a way it's the most. Protective of the films of the world of filmmaking. That. How do I say this? That. Isn't really important to the film industry, you know, and there are other venues that mix things and that I really appreciate. And I love the film forum and I love Metrograph and I love, you know, mixing European film and so-called art films with appreciating commercial films that are like artistic or interesting on, on whatever level. But anthologies, the kind of I don't like to use the word pure exactly. But it's the most protective, I think, of, the more fragile kind of films. And they're not fragile in and of themselves. They're some are extremely powerful, but their existence is fragile, you know? And that's why Joan is, wanting to archive things was so important. So anthology is very



particular. And it's not just particular in New York. It's kind of particular in the world. So, yeah, it's, really important place for me. I'm hoping for the cafe, you know, that Jonas wanted to have here, because I kept telling him, that's going to be my hangout, Jonas. I'm not. You're not going to get rid of me. I'm just going to come there every day. So I know that was important to him. To have a kind of a little cafe sort of social spot. Because anthology also, and this sounds kind of cliched, but it's also a kind of a community, you know. So because the people that have worked here over the years and people come here, I think they all like, appreciate each other because it's for the appreciation of this part of filmmaking. And, yeah, it's pretty unusual, really, for sure. Although I have enough trouble just trying to get the money and the time and the energy to make them. So, but yeah, it's very important to me. And I'm pretty aware and I've made trips, years and years ago, I went to Rochester, to the Eastman House because they invited me to speak to the graduating class of film preservation students. Right. So I went there and they showed me where they worked and the preservation facilities, and it was really great. But there were only like eight students that I spoke to. And rather than speaking to them, I, I just was very interested in what they did and encouraging. And then I said, how would you like to celebrate your graduating? So we'd like to go with you to our favorite dive bar in Rochester and hang out tonight. So that's sort of what we did as the, you know, graduating ceremony. But but I really appreciated them and their work. And they I thought it was so cool because we when we went into the facility where they worked, we put on white lab coat and everything. It was just, I don't know, they they were really fantastic people. So yeah, preserving these forms which now are becoming obsolete, you know, and very, very fragile physically,



film materials and how to preserve them. It's a big kind of problem and something that is being addressed by a lot of amazing people.

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KATIE DAVISON:

We interviewed Peter Bogdanovich a couple of weeks ago, and he was telling us about so many of the pieces of his early works that had already been lost, even some, some elements of mask. Have you had any of those issues and with any of your work or.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

No. And I've been very, very careful. And all my films go to the Academy Archives in Los Angeles now. I also I love the Eastman House as well, and I almost put them there, but, the Academy Film Archives is incredible. And they will. They didn't make me sign anything that my films are there in perpetuity. They're like, well, you can sign on with us and have us preserve them, but you can remove them in the future if you so choose, or move them somewhere else, which was not the case at other archives for me. So I like that. So yeah. And they're really, really great out there too. So I all the film preservation people are really admirable to me.

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KATIE DAVISON:

I mean, I guess the thing that I try to understand about Jonas is that it's so rare for somebody who's also an artist to be so good at building a community as well, and dealing with all of these huge personalities. Like, we have this



interview with Ginsburg where he really talks about Jonas just being able to, like, be this social center in this world of huge personalities. And it was almost like magic. You know, I wonder if you have any insight into that sort of rare aspect of who as well.

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JIM JARMUSCH:

Well, you see it in his work and all the people that he attracted or was attracted to their work. You know, it's just incredible. I just, you know, I don't know, I remember being, once with Robert Frank and running, and this is, like, sounds so name dropping, historically, but being with Robert and then running into, Harry Smith and then running into Jonas, who then chess was talking, talking to to them about so many exciting things. But the idea of those two guys and like, oh, there's Jonas and here's Jonas. And then the energy level just started elevating, you know, and later I thought, I went home, I thought, oh my God, I was just with Robert Frank, Harry Smith and Jonas me, you know. But to Jonas, it was like, oh, here's some cohorts that I, I'm interested in always and blah, blah, blah, you know, talking up the storm to them.

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KATIE DAVISON:

I think Harry lived here for a while.

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JIM JARMUSCH:



Once when Harry got thrown out after the Chelsea and he was living in some hotel in Brooklyn. He had to move out. He was being thrown out and he had a lot of his work too. And I ran into Robert Frank on the street and Robert said, okay, Jim, what are you doing right now? Nothing really. I don't know what's going to go over there. Bob. I thought you said, come with me. We got to help Harry Smith. We got to help him move his stuff in Brooklyn. Is that okay? And I was like, sure. And then Robert and I were over there, you know, unloading his apartment and putting stuff in some rented van for Harry Smith, you know. But these people, you know, they weren't full of themselves. They didn't think of themselves in self-important ways. Of course, they were protective of their work and, and valued it, you know, and valued each other's work. But, I just loved how kind of off hand they were, like, you know, they were real, real bohemian people, you know, not interested in the really the square world was not of importance to them. So that was a big, you know, inspiration for me when I was younger, for sure.

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KATIE DAVISON:

I've heard you say that, you are an amateur. What do you mean?

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JIM JARMUSCH:

I don't like being thought of as a professional at whatever I do, you know? Because to me, professional means you do this for to earn your living, you know, which I try to do, of course, but that's not my. That's not my intention. So I just feel more comfortable because the root of the word amateur means the love of a form and professional involves and plus the financial aspect of it.



So I just like to think of myself as, a lover of these forms rather than. And my approach is probably not very professional in a lot of ways as well. I'm very much, intuitive, and I rely on my intuition more than my, sense of analysis. And when you know, you're working with people whose money you're using, they like to having all of that stuff analyzed in advance, you know, and I'm not good at that. Even on my own films, the production is my own production. But even the production side will ask us with good reason. How many setups do you plan to do today? And my kind of, arrogant answer is usually, we'll tell you at the end of the day, because I don't like to have this, these plans put on the work, I don't know, I might I might decide I want to shoot this scene in one set up. And so I'm going to work on that all morning. Or I might decide, yeah, I need six setups in the next hour and then we're going to do that, you know. But I don't always know the day before. Exactly. So I don't know. And it's also a little protective to be amateurish because then. You can have. It implies, in a way, a little bit of, maybe rough edges or coloring outside the lines in a way. So I don't know.

00:38:50:00

KATIE DAVISON:

That Improvizational style really, really reminds me of, you know, a lot of those early filmmakers and like Cassavetes and stuff. And B, you're saying he can't be categorized like we can't say yes, they were experimental filmmakers.

00:39:04:00

JIM JARMUSCH:



You mean Cassavetes particularly? Well, he's hard to categorize. He found his own way, you know. And what drove Cassavetes was the. What's the intention? What is the message of the film first and then the style? You know, and often when we make films without a lot of money, the style is almost determined by limitations, you know. And Jonas knew that he loved the idea of limitations. And, so those things are very important to me. And I learned a lot from Robby Mueller, the great cinematographer that I worked with for quite a few years, who always said, okay, it's good to have a shot list for us and an idea of how we're going to approach it. But the day, the hour on which we go to shoot everything may be different the light, the source of the light, the sun, whatever. So we must always be adaptable and thinking on our feet about how to find, you know, how to photograph the thing we're trying to gather, to make a story, a film out of. So yeah, I'm not real rigorous in in, you know, I'm more rigorous in, being attuned to intuition than to the sticking to the plan, particularly. But, you know, I'm not an experimental filmmaker. I make, you know, I make narrative films. I just kind of like to have the rules not be too, imposing on me and find my own way. And I love style. So, you know, Cassavetes, people like Scorsese, you know Kiarostami. All of these people have their own styles in a way clear to me. You know, you can sort of. Even if they're not a signature you feel they're. I don't know their approach to to the forum.

00:41:05:00

KATIE DAVISON:

Do you remember the last time you talked to Jonas?

00:41:08:00



JIM JARMUSCH:

I think it was the last time we did. I think I saw them once after the time we did this little interview. I'm around the corner here. And then I saw him once after that here. And I went downstairs and hung out in the office for a while. What was the last term? But I got to see him. I thought he was one of those guys that was going to just keep doing what he did until he. His body just stopped allowing him to. You know, I never. I was a little surprised, oddly, when we lost him because I just thought, yeah, Jonas. He's gone. For the record, he's going to be 110, you know? But I knew he wasn't because, you know, your body wears out. But honestly, I never really thought much about losing him. That's why when he left, it was a bit of a shock. You know, you're never really, ready for it. You know, losing Robert Frank and his health wasn't good for a while, but still, it was a hit, because you you just want them to still be there. They're just so important that they're out there doing things. I remember, you know, this journalist from Chicago, Studs Terkel. He died after he finished the promotion of his last book. And I think he was around Jonas's age, late mid to late 90s. And I remember an interview toward the end of his life and they said, man, you're getting up there. You're traveling around doing this book tour. You know, do you think about your mortality? And he said, well, I just got to finish this tour. You know, that's all I'm thinking about. I can't go until I finish this job here and then who knows? I don't know, I'm old. And then he finished the tour, and then he died. But he had that thing he had to do, you know, and I don't think Jonas quite wanted to leave yet, because I think he really was really excited about Anthology Film Archives and, you know, making it what he wanted it to finally be.

00:43:18:00





KATIE DAVISON:

For an audience. Who? You know, is there any, like, final big lessons that you took away from Jonas' life and influence that would be important to convey that audience?

00:43:30:00

JIM JARMUSCH:

Well, man, I think we've been talking about them this whole interview. You know. I think it's like, follow your instincts and appreciate the details and be a fan as well as an artist, because Charles was a big fan of everybody, you know. But I don't know. I don't know how to some that I'm not good at that kind of thing. But I did think the other day of Jonas and images of Jonas with a Bolex camera reminded me, I don't know, in the moment of Woody Guthrie's guitar that he had written on This Machine Kills Fascists or whatever, but that guitar was his was his weapon in a way, or his way of delivering things. And Jonas Bolex was equally iconic to me in a funny way. So, you know. This, this machine destroys preconceptions of what is filmmaking. I don't know, just put it in Jonas's hands and see what he does.

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KATIE DAVISON:

When you transitioned to video, did you talk to him about easily making that transition? Never.

00:44:44:00

JIM JARMUSCH:



No, but I talked to him once about visiting Chris Marker in Outside of Paris, because once I got to visit. Chris Marker in a small editing room that had been, paid for by a French producer for Chris Marker. And I went in there and Chris Marker was very nice to me. He had like, the films I'd made up to that point, and he was editing on video. But he had been with a lot of, this is kind of a long story, but he had a bin with a lot of trims from film, but in it was a cat, a mother cat with her kittens in the bin. And he said, yes, well, you know, I love cats. And she just had babies. And I will not disturb that bin of film material. But it doesn't really matter because I've been working a lot in video lately. But I want to finish this film once she takes her babies out of there, but I'm not going to disturb her and go ahead, peek in. I looked the mother cat with her kittens, you know, and, and Chris Marker was working on video and he said, well, it's just another tool. It's just. Is it a pen or is it a pencil? I don't know, I'm just going to make stuff now with video for now. And I have a good excuse because the cat and I related this story. A journalist loved that story. You know, he said something about, yes, we are almost we must always have priorities. You know, about Chris Marker like, well, the cat's deciding for me that I'm going to pick up the pen instead of the pencil or. But I didn't talk to Jonas about his. Specific feelings himself about these different forms. They're just tools, you know? People used to say when and when photography was invented, they wrote that the, you know, the idea of painting is dead forever because painting had been representational, you know, but now we can take a picture. So we don't need painters. And, you know, it's absurd. The tools remain, and they're always beautiful, depending on how they're used.

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KATIE DAVISON:



I think that really covers it for me. Do you have anything that I didn't cover?

00:47:03:00

JIM JARMUSCH:

Oh, yeah. One thing, that I think is important about us is. You know, is I guess the word displacement is interesting to me because of his whole personal history and being displaced and coming from Lithuania and all the things he and his brother went through and all the things, and I think that was something valuable. And in a way, I don't know if it was analyzed by Joan as much, but that sense of displacement. Informs a lot about his films, about his relations with people, about. What were his priorities in terms of human expression? So it's something really interesting to me. And I there's a very early poem by John Ashbery, where there's a line about, all beauty, resonance and integrity exist by deprivation or logic of strange position. And I recently was rereading that poem, and for some reason I thought of Jonas because I thought of, you know, exist by deprivation or logic of strange position. And it seemed like a beautiful way of sort of describing how Jonas approached filmmaking, you know, because deprivation, okay, we don't have all this money. We don't have objects. This isn't like a Hollywood movie shoot. I have a Bolex, you know. And also being, you know, having a sort of strange position, being an immigrant, having what he went through and, being somewhat so well read and educated pretty much on his own, and the fact that he wasn't always spouting things, he was also observing and listening to him. So, yeah, I appreciate his the logic of strange position of Jonas somehow I don't know what that means, but that hit me the other day when I was rereading this, the first book of poems of John Ashbery.



00:49:15:00

KATIE DAVISON:

Love of cinema. Just why is that important?

00:49:20:00

JIM JARMUSCH:

Well, it's very it's the closest thing humans create to to dreams, you know, and this and, you know, Jonas is not wanting to differentiate between memory and dream and diary recollection and imagination. You know, he he loved these blurring of these things. He found within that blurring, he found really something powerful. So and I got to say, I love when I read things, Jonas writes. I love whenever he uses the word camera. For some reason, I'm attracted to when he mentions a camera, which is it's just a physical machine, a device. But he'll, you know, he'll say, you know, the we will speak through our cameras, you know, he will give the, the camera some kind of importance, which I love. I love a quote of one of my favorite American Hollywood filmmakers, Sam Fuller said, what did he say? He said, he referred to the camera as being his typewriter. Like I write with the camera, you know, and Jonas too. I love his sort of reverence for this machine that can capture things and change the way we we look at the world, you know, at the details around us.

END TC: 00:51:08:00