

AATSINKI

CONTACT:

Jim Browne
Argot Pictures
jim@argotpictures.com
646-732-3725

SYNOPSIS

Aatsinki: The Story of Arctic Cowboys presents one year in the life of a family of reindeer herders in Finnish Lapland. It is a study of hard work, hard earned leisure, and an intricate bond between man and nature.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Brothers Aarne and Lasse Aatsinki are cowboys of the Arctic. Quiet but good natured, dare-devilish but humble, rugged but gentle, and exceptionally knowledgeable when it comes to their little slice of wilderness. These men are what John Wayne wanted to be.

The brothers, along with their wives and children, live well north of the Arctic Circle in Finnish Lapland, where they are the leaders of a collective of traditional reindeer herders who manage the last group of wild reindeer in all of Finland. *Aatsinki* follows the family for the span of one year, quietly observing their seasonal routines and the difficulties and joys of a life so closely tied to the land.

Theirs is a story of action and work, of small moments between husband and wife, father and daughter, animal and man, man and landscape. It is a life of sweeping panoramas and commonplace details. The simplicity of the film allows the extraordinary action to shine through, whether it be a thousand reindeer cresting a hill or Aarne's daughter opening a Christmas present.

Though, on the surface, *Aatsinki* is the story of a single family, its underlying narrative is one of global consequences and connections. Between their uncanny understanding of the landscape and their reindeer on the one hand, and their heavy reliance on snowmobiles and helicopters on the other, the herders have been categorized as beacons of sustainability and demons of environmentalism – in essence, poster children for simplicity and technology alike. Their story raises weighty questions about what it means to live with the land and invites audience members to reconsider their own assumptions about technology, food production, and, most critically, man's place in nature.



THE INTERACTIVE COMPANION

Aatsinki: The Story Of Arctic Cowboys is accompanied by an online companion called *The Aatsinki Season*. Part video story, part interactive debate, it brings you – the participant – face to face with the challenges of being a reindeer herder in Finnish Lapland.

While the film focuses on the Aatsinki family and their deep connection to their reindeer and the land, *The Aatsinki Season* draws attention to the social, environmental, political, and moral dilemmas that the herders face on a daily basis. In so doing, it also highlights how the seemingly distant difficulties of the herding lifestyle are, in fact, the same kinds of struggles faced by agricultural communities around the world.

Episodes of *The Aatsinki Season* will be released in seasonal installments over the course of a year, coordinated to coincide with the real-time events of the herding schedule.



CREW

Producer/Director: Jessica Oreck makes projects large and small that instill a sense of wonder and invite viewers to question their relationship with the natural world. Jessica's award-winning first feature-length documentary, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo*, played theatrically around the world and aired on PBS's *Independent Lens* series. She is currently in post-production on two new feature films and several short animated projects, including the recently released web series, *Mysteries of Vernacular*.

Co-Producer: Rachael Teel has more than ten years production and outreach experience with NPR, PBS/NATURE, National Geographic Television & Film, and Myriapod Productions. She holds a Master of Environmental Science with a focus in environmental anthropology from Yale University.

Co-Producer: Jari Etelalahti is the founder of the Eat & Joy Festival and food co-op in Helsinki, Finland. He also produces a monthly food trade magazine and is well-known as the Finnish "Father of Local Food" and the region's "Reindeer Ambassador." Along with his skills as a translator, Jari is close personal and professional friends with *Aatsinki's* main characters.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Aatsinki is part rugged cowboy adventure, part environmental study, and 100% a love letter to this family's way of life. I found Aarne and Lasse while searching for the modern equivalent of the classic American frontier story. Though they ride snowmobiles instead of horses and wear fur hats instead of Stetsons, they are quintessential Arctic cowboys. Having made their home in one of the most extreme environments imaginable, they have pioneered and prospered where most people wouldn't even vacation.

With *Aatsinki*, I hope to make sub-zero weather, 24-hour nights, and an intense bond with nature feel real to someone who has always had a thermostat and known the glow of electricity. The film creates an atmosphere, a soundscape, and a pace that will fully submerge the audience into Finnish Lapland and its people.



ABOUT MYRIAPOD PRODUCTIONS, LLC

Myriapod Productions was founded by Jessica Oreck in 2008. Based in New York City, the company produces original media content with a focus on education and the exploration of the natural sciences, particularly within the field of ethnobiology.