

BJÖRK GUÐMUNDSDÓTTIR THE JUNIPER TREE





New 4K Restoration from the original 35mm camera negative.

Nietzchka Keene's haunting 1990 Icelandic supernatural fairy tale/witchcraft drama, starring music and fashion icon Björk, in a new restoration by the Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research and The Film Foundation, with funding provided by the George Lucas Family Foundation.

An unsung talent in her lifetime, director, professor and Fulbright scholar Nietzchka Keene's stark, stunning debut feature *The Juniper Tree* is loosely based on a Brothers Grimm fairy tale of the same name, and stars Björk in her first feature film performance. The film premiered to glowing reviews at the Sundance Film Festival in 1991 and led Keene to further direct *Heroine of Hell* (1996) starring Catherine Keener and *Barefoot to Jerusalem* (2008), the latter completed after her tragically early death in 2004.

Set in medieval Iceland, *The Juniper Tree* follows Margit (Björk in a riveting performance) and her older sister Katla (Bryndis Petra Bragadottir) as they flee for safety after their mother is burned to death for witchcraft. Finding shelter and protection with Johan (Valdimar Orn Flygenring.), and his resentful young son, Jonas (Geirlaug Sunna Thormar), the sisters help form an impromptu family unit that's soon strained by Katla's burgeoning sorcery. Photographed entirely on location in the stunning landscapes of Iceland in spectacular black-and-white by Randy Sellars, *The Juniper Tree* is a deeply atmospheric film, evocative of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* and Ingmar Bergman's *The Virgin Spring*, and filled with indelible waking dream sequences (courtesy of legendary experimental filmmaker Pat O'Neill). A potent allegory for misogyny and its attendant tragedies, is a major rediscovery for art house audiences.

1990 / dir: Nietzchka Keene / 78 min / B&W / English / DCP + Digital Formats

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CAST

MARGIT.....Björk Guðmundsdóttir
KATLA.....Bryndis Petra Bragadóttir
JOHANN.....Valdimar Örn Flygenring
MOTHER.....Guðrún Gísladóttir
JONAS.....Geirlaug Sunna Þormar

CREW

WRITER AND DIRECTOR: NIETZCHKA KEENE
PRODUCER: NIETZCHKA KEENE
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: PATRICK MOYROUD
PRODUCTION MANAGER: INGUNN ÁSDÍSARDÓTTIR
CINEMATOGRAPHER: RANDY SELLARS
MUSIC: LARRY LIPKIS
EDITOR: NIETZCHKA KEENE
EDITING CUNSLTANT: CHRIS PAINTER
ART DIRECTION: DOMINIQUE POLAIN



Nietzchka Keene

Director/Writer/Producer/Editor

Nietzchka Keene (1952–2004) was an American film director and writer best known for *The Juniper Tree*, a feature film shot in Iceland, and starring the Icelandic singer Björk in her first film role. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2004 and died, aged 52, on October 20, 2004. She taught film making and editing in the University of Wisconsin–Madison until her death.

She was born in 1952 and raised near Boston, Massachusetts. She received her BA in 1975 in Germanic linguistics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and her Master of Fine Arts in film production from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1979. While at UCLA she served as a research assistant in Old Icelandic language and linguistics under Dr. Jesse Byock.

Keene worked in various capacities in the film industry in Los Angeles while attending graduate school, including positions as a recordist for a sound studio, a dialogue editor in a post-production house, a projectionist, and a re-recording mixer at UCLA. She produced three short films as a graduate student – *Friends* (1977), *Still* (1978) and *Hinterland* (1983). In 1986 after returning from her Fulbright year she wrote the script for *The Juniper Tree* and returned to shoot the film in 1987 on location in Iceland. It was the first film to star the well-known singer and actress Björk, in the role of a young child in a story based on a fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm. She won a Verna Fields Memorial Scholarship from UCLA in 1987 for editing *The Juniper Tree*, completing it in 1989. It has been screened in more than 23 festivals and invitational events around the world, including the Sundance Film Festival, the Harvard Film Archive, and the Art Institute of Chicago. It won the Prix du Public at the Festival des Films des Femmes de Montreal in 1990 and the First Prize for First Film at the Troia International Film Festival in Troia, Portugal in 1991.

She produced a short film, *Aves*, in 1994, with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the University of Miami, which used innovative animation techniques to illuminate the spiritual state of a cloistered nun. *Heroine of Hell*, her second feature film, was funded by a grant from the Independent Television Service, a PBS-backed production initiative launched in the early 1990s to develop innovative creative work for public television. She shot *Heroine of Hell*, a narrative combining medieval iconography with a present-day storyline and starring Catherine Keener and Dermot Mulroney, on location in Miami, completing it in 1995. It was distributed via PBS to member stations in 1996.

A full-length script, *Sleeping Beauty*, was optioned by an independent filmmaker in Los Angeles in 1991. Keene had two projects in progress at the time of her death. One, a script entitled *Belle*, was based on the true story of a female serial killer, Belle Gunness, in La Porte, Indiana, in the early years of the 20th century. She had nearly completed a third feature film, *Barefoot to Jerusalem*, at the time of her death.

Barefoot to Jerusalem is a story of a woman's journey, after her lover's suicide, through a solitary landscape which brings her into battle with the devil. The film was shot on location in Madison, Wisconsin and in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in 2001 and was in the final stages of post-production at the time of her death. It has since been completed and was released in 2008.

- University of Wisconsin–Madison

Filmography:

The Juniper Tree (1990)

Heroine of Hell (1996)

Barefoot to Jerusalem (2008)



Björk

Björk, in full Björk Guðmundsdóttir, (born November 21, 1965, Reykjavík, Iceland), Icelandic singer-songwriter and actress best known for her solo work covering a wide variety of music styles. Integrating electronic and organic sounds, her music frequently explored the relationship between nature and technology.

Björk recorded her first solo album, a collection of cover versions of popular songs, as an 11-year-old music student in 1977. Throughout her teens she performed with various short-lived bands, ending up at age 18 with Kukl, a punk group that eventually became the Sugarcubes. With Björk as lead vocalist, the Sugarcubes won acclaim in the United Kingdom with their first album, *Life's Too Good* (1986). After recording two more albums over the next five years, *Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week!* and *Stick Around for Joy*, the band broke up, and Björk embarked on a solo career.

After moving to London, Björk released *Debut*, her first international solo album, in 1993. It was a departure from the harder-edged sound of the Sugarcubes and included a wide variety of musical styles ranging from techno-pop to jazz. *Debut* produced a number of hit singles, including “Big Time Sensuality” and “Venus as a Boy.” Her follow-up, *Post* (1995), opened with the single “Army of Me,” a characteristically throbbing, synthesized track accompanied by the singer’s now-familiar breathy yodel. Never content to conform, Björk in 1997 released her most experimental works to date: *Telegram*, an entire album of *Post* remixes, and *Homogenic*, a studio effort with collaborator Mark Bell. Bell and Björk also worked together on *Selmasongs*, the score for Lars von Trier’s *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), a tragic musical in which she also starred. The film won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes film festival, and Björk was named best actress.

In 2001 Björk released the quiet and hypnotic *Vespertine*. Her first studio album in four years, it refrained from pushing the musical boundaries that had made her a star of the 1990s and instead focused on a more rhythmic, contemplative intimacy. *Medúlla* (2004) was an all-vocals and vocal samples-based album that featured beatboxers (vocal-percussion artists), Icelandic and British choirs, and traditional Inuit vocalists, while the similarly eclectic *Volta* (2007) boasted sombre brass arrangements, African rhythms, and guest production from Timbaland. For the ethereal *Biophilia* (2011), Björk used tablet computers to help her compose songs, which were released, in addition to conventional formats, as a series of interactive iPhone and iPad apps. Björk performed “Oceania,” a single from *Medúlla*, at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens. She also composed the sound track for her romantic partner Matthew Barney’s film *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005). Björk excavated the end of her relationship with Barney on the devastating *Vulnicura* (2015), coproduced with Arca, and she worked with Arca again on *Utopia* (2017), which incorporated recordings of birdsong and a flute ensemble.

As a response to the financial turmoil that rocked Iceland in 2008, Björk partnered with an Icelandic venture capital firm to establish a fund that would invest in socially and ecologically responsible businesses. She was awarded the Polar Music Prize for lifetime achievement by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in 2010.



About the Restoration

Arbelos' release of *The Juniper Tree* has been fully preserved in 35mm and remastered to 4K digital video by the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research and the Film Foundation, with funding provided by the George Lucas Family Foundation.

Photochemical picture source was the original 35mm BW picture negative A & B rolls. These were used by Fotokem as the source for a fully timed 35mm answer print, release print, and preservation fine grain master positive.

In parallel to the photochemical work, the original 35mm BW picture negative A & B rolls were scanned in 4K on a Lasergraphics ScanStation, and digitally reconstituted, cleaned up, and graded at Illuminate Hollywood. The 35mm film's natural grain has been left untouched. The black-and-white grading was approved by cinematographer Randolph Sellars.

Sound source was the original 35mm magnetic soundtrack mix, which was captured and remastered at Audio Mechanics, Burbank.

Restoration Supervisor: Ross Lipman

In consultation with: Amy Sloper, Patrick Moyroud, Randolph Sellars

DI Colorist: Andrew Drapkin, Illuminate Hollywood

Film Scanning and Digital mastering: Illuminate Hollywood

35mm film printing: Fotokem

35mm grader: Doug Ledin, Fotokem

Audio Restoration and Mastering: John Polito, Audio Mechanics

Special Thanks:

Steve Wiener, Bill Tayman, Kim Young, Andrew Oran, Simon Daniel