



# Les Saisons / Seasons

Production Jacques Perrin and Jérôme Seydoux  
 Direction Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud  
 Photography headed by Eric Guichard AFC and Stéphane Aupetit, Michel Benjamin, Jérôme Bouvier, Laurent Charbonnier, Philippe Garguil, Laurent Fleutot, Sylvain Maillard, Christophe Pottier, Jam Walencik

Following “Oceans” with around 7.5 million tickets sold worldwide, including 2.9M in France, and “Winged Migration” with 4.6 million tickets sold worldwide, including 2.7M in France, “The Seasons” is the latest nature documentary from Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud.

“Seasons” has brought new challenges for the production - a 26 Million Euro production budget, 500 hours of rushes, a team of 10 camera operators, a shooting time spread of 18 months from June 2013 to December 2014 in forty locations, mostly located in France, but also in Finland, Poland, Norway, Scotland, Romania, Switzerland and Canada..

After focusing on birds in “Winged Migration” (2001), and the underwater world in “Oceans” (2009), Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud chose to stage a poetic 15,000-year old chronicle of Europe, exclusively filmed from the viewpoint of the wild life. The movie recounts the adventure of the animals settling in Europe that had to adapt to their environment, due to climate change and growing influence of the humans.

To choose the best equipment for “Seasons”, cinematographer Luc Drion started testing cameras, but he died in a tragic accident in 2012 during the production of Nicolas Vanier’s “Belle and Sébastien”. His close friend - Eric Guichard AFC., decided to complete that task by following Luc Drion’s meticulous work in selection of the best equipment for shooting the documentary.

On “Seasons”, Eric Guichard was responsible for the aesthetic, in terms of quality and need of all the images. He was also helped by Laurent Desbruères from Digimage, who calibrated all the previous films for Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud.

## CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT

**Eric Guichard:** In 2012, Luc had begun numerous tests on the cameras that were available. Systematically there was a 35mm film shot to refer back to what the two directors knew best. The first thing for Luc to do and then for me, was to convince Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud to accept working with digital cameras.

“Oceans” was shot partially in digital, but only because the seabed is a very particular place. Among other things, using digital cameras made it possible to make the underwater shooting much longer but, Luc Drion nevertheless shot all the land-based sequences in film.

In 2012, Sony’s F65 had just been released. The question of workflow management still frightened the production teams but, I was very enthusiast about what that camera could bring on this project. Jacques Perrin, with his permanent concern for naturalism wanted to convey physical sensations: fur, plumage, horse coat colours, etc., I finally selected the Sony F65 because of its high resolution, colour space, and its ability to record the movement.

The choice of lenses is also crucial for me...



The choice of the zooms arises quickly, since we knew we were not able to achieve multiple takes when filming animals. On "Seasons", the producers wanted to break away from the standard usage of long focal lengths in wildlife photography. In addition, Jacques Perrin had never been a fan of long focal length. The idea was to work as close as possible to the animals. Focal lenses were used to produce a naturalistic perspective intended to give the viewer a true sense of being immersed in nature; for example, we were very close from the buffalos and bears. Everything in the movie was designed to preserve the integrity of the animals and minimize any disruption to their normal behaviour - from the blue tits to the bears and, from the hedgehogs to the muskox.

The lens had to be at their height for each shot, in order to have a close feeling of the animal on the screen. A small remote-controlled crane with a removable head was the obvious choice! We could then work close to the animals without scaring them, and without damaging their surroundings.

I wanted zooms that broke this overly surgical texture up a bit and to bring some roundness, in order to cut the artificial sharpness of the digital camera. I shot "Belle and Sebastien" in film with Angénieux zooms - I thought they will be the perfect optics to achieve the look I wanted for "Seasons".

Since Microcosmos, Jacques Perrin has been constantly looking for specific tools for camera angles. We used the Steadicam a lot for all the chase scenes to bring the feeling of speed.

For "Seasons", Louma Systems, in collaboration with Alexander Bugel from Sandor Weltmann, developed a four-wheel electric scooter for working directly in the middle of the forest.

A Steadicam operator was on the scooter, either in the front or, the rear. The focus puller was on a quad bike at a good distance away. The director also followed the scene from the quad bike in order to stay close to the action.

We needed light, compact, and quickly interchangeable lenses. We also required rugged lenses able to withstand the filming conditions.

We also had to make sure we'll have the zooms available for the entire 18 months of shooting. We started with four teams but, from the beginning I knew at certain times there would be more. Johann Mousseau started thinking about a partnership with Angénieux, because there were not enough zooms available for rent in Paris to handle the production. We ended up purchasing five zooms in order to guarantee the availability of our equipment.

We also approached rental companies in Paris. Panavision and Emit provided all the complementary equipment.

We constantly had ten zooms on location. We used Angénieux's entire spherical Optimo range: Optimo 24-290, Optimo 28-340, Optimo 19.5-94, Optimo 45-120, Optimo 28-76 and Optimo 15-40 plus several extenders.

## MANAGING FILMING

When I read the script, I started working with Martin Blum and Vincent Steiger, the assistant directors and Olli Barbé, the film's executive producer, and created a detailed list of the equipment and resources required for each scene; hence, providing the production company with better visibility for the 18 month of shooting that was planned.

We established four types of shooting depending on the extent of the architecture that would be required. The most complex scenes required at least two cameras, several lights, a DIT, the scooter or the quad bike, a gyro-stabilized head. Michel Benjamin and I were particularly involved with these scenes in different environments: rain, snow and night. Scenes allowing for a lighter architecture: a single camera and a limited team (less than 10 people, not counting the animal handlers), many of the scenes were shot by Laurent Fleutot. The microlight flight scenes that required little infrastructure, but movement and time, were shot by Christophe Pottier. Finally, the so-called "wild" sequences with 3/4 people maximum (camera operator, assistant, data manager, and sometimes a grip) were filmed by DoP Laurent Charbonnier or Philippe Garguil, who have a fantastic knowledge of animal behaviour, and know well how to get close to the animal.

Breaking this down beforehand was invaluable for me in organizing the aesthetic of the movie. François Patrel as DIT - Digital Imaging Technician - played a major role in organizing the data management, and thanks to him we were able to give the directors a clearer image on the set.

## MANAGING THE ANIMALS

Jacques Perrin did not want to use any digital special effects, but wanted the animals to be able to move around in the most natural conditions possible.

In the original script the movie began in prehistorical time but, since mammoths are extinct and can only be recreated using computer graphics, the producer decided to set up the start of the movie only 20,000 years ago... For few a key shots which help the narration of the film - for example, for the lynx attack of the doe, the animals were imprinted. That technique was also used for the wolves and some birds. Imprinting means that the different species of animals are born, reared, and kept together.

After 18 months of shooting, the film was edited by Vincent Schmitt between May 2014 and June 2015. Olivier Garcia and Sebastien Bradu at HD Systems managed the rushes. Between May and December 2015, Digimage Cinema and Laurent Desbruères were in charge of the calibration and final edition to the validation of the DCP for release.

