



presents
SEASONS

A film by Jacques Perrin & Jacques Cluzaud



95 min | France | 2016 | PG | 2.35
In French with English subtitles

Official Website: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/seasons>
Press Materials: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/seasons-press>
Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPC2kZQ9kwU>

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AWARDS AND FESTIVALS

Opening Night Selection - 2016 Maine International Film Festival
Official Selection - 2016 Seattle International Film Festival
Official Selection - 2016 Martha's Vineyards Environmental Film Festival
Official Selection - 2016 Boston French Film Festival
Official Selection - 2016 Columbus Children's Film Festival

SYNOPSIS

After traveling the world alongside migrating birds (*Winged Migration*) and diving the oceans with whales and manta rays (*Oceans*), Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud return to more familiar ground: the lush green forests and megafauna that emerged across Europe following the last Ice Age.

Winter had gone on for 80,000 years when—in a relatively short period of time—the ice retreated, the landscape metamorphosed, the cycle of seasons was established, and the beasts occupied their new kingdom. It was only later that man arrived to share this habitat, first tentatively as migratory hunter/gatherers, then making inroads in the forest as settled agriculturalists, and later more dramatically via industry and warfare.

With its exceptional footage of animals in the wild, *Seasons* is the awe-inspiring and thought-provoking tale of the long and tumultuous shared history that inextricably binds humankind with the natural world.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

By Jacques Perrin

Where we stand now, whether in Paris, London, or Berlin, used to be covered with immense forests, stretching as far as the eye can see. The undergrowth resonated with the hooves of bison, aurochs, horses, and deer, with their bellowing and lowing. The whole of Europe was experiencing the golden age of the forest, a period during which trees could die of old age, could die standing. These trees that, over the course of thousands of years, were transformed into a rich and fertile soil, these forests of bygone days that make our harvests so abundant today.

Without forests, we'd have no soil, no freshwater, and no life. Humankind grew up with the forests over a period of 10,000 years. They fed us, heated us, and protected us. Better still, they fed into our dreams, our fairytales, and our legends. They are our playground in childhood, and the last free space in our urbanized world. Human beings need trees. But today, the trees need us humans. We are living in a chaotic yet fascinating time. Over a single human lifetime, rural civilization has disappeared. Agriculture has become an industry and the countryside has been almost completely rid of its people, its flowers, its butterflies, and swallows. We congratulate ourselves on the ongoing expansion of both French and European forests, which have doubled in terms of their surface area since Napoleon, and at the same time, we are bleeding our tropical and equatorial forests dry. We see the forest as one of our best weapons for fighting global warming, but we are realizing that the majority of the planet's trees, if they have not already been cut down, are suffering an embolism as the climate becomes too hot, and too dry in particular. These fragile giants will soon no longer be able to help counter the crisis our climate is facing.

We must accept that these wild species are not governed by our rules and calculations, and do not respond to our demands for profitability nor our esthetic criteria. The human race doesn't just need what the forest produces, it needs the unpredictability of the living world. It needs dreams, adventures, and surprises. Our thirst for perfection is impossible to quench. It needs an adventure playground that corresponds to its immensity.

Before any discussion, the Iroquois Native American confederacy would elect one of their members to speak for the wolf, an emblematic figure in their civilization. Who today speaks for the trees and butterflies, the toads and wolves, the elephants and whales, for all these creatures, large and small? Canadian biologist David Suzuki, a specialist in all things forest, wrote that: "To understand trees, you must understand the forest." And he finished by calling for a new universal declaration – not a declaration of independence like so many, rather a declaration of interdependence of all living creatures.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

By Jacques Cluzaud

When you work alongside Jacques Perrin, a new film means new challenges. Of course, flying with birds above the Earth, or swimming with marine creatures through the oceans is a challenge, but by definition, that leads one towards the spectacular. But how can we today take a fresh look at animals that are as familiar and as frequently filmed as those in our forests, like hedgehogs, foxes, deer or boar? How can we rediscover the creatures on our doorstep? How can we see characters in these animals that are as extraordinary as those that fly through the skies or swim through the oceans? And that's not even the biggest challenge.

We do not just have to get close to the inhabitants of the forest and witness their most intimate moments and frantic chases, we also have to accompany them on a trip through time and history. We must run with wild animals through the 12,000 years that separate us from the last Ice Age. We must revisit history from the animal's point of view and make a film that shifts the way we see our own history. Those are the challenges of this new adventure called *Seasons*.

The film starts when the physiognomy of the European Continent was altered by a sudden period of warming. The frozen world gave way to a huge forest covering Europe. This vast, verdant territory provided a backdrop to a golden age for animal species, and a handful of hunter-gatherers, heralding thousands of years of peaceful coexistence between those who venerated the trees and the natural world. Then the trees were felled, chopped down by stone axes, and human history started to unfold.

What if we were to take a fresh look at the complex and tumultuous relationship we have with nature? Can we get close enough to wildlife to feel the yoke the human race has placed around its neck? It is not words that tell us about these millennia of cohabitation, rather the emotion which, in a wildlife film, must come through without a voice. To us, getting close to an animal isn't just about observing it, and even less about learning about it; it's about capturing an attitude, a gaze which, in a hugely diverse range of situations, will inspire a creative emotion within us, not just involving compassion, but in particular, involving empathy with these wild creatures.

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

By Bruno Coulais

For the music for *Seasons*, I wanted to position the film within a natural story. Balancing the musical density with the density of the image was something I was constantly considering, and as such, the music is often perceived in the distance, like songs amidst the sounds of the forest. It colors the soundtrack with a certain melancholy because it does not comment on the situation. It also marks the time and the immutable changing of the seasons with bell chimes, marimbas, vibraphones, music boxes and light strumming of harps and strings. I arranged the orchestration to fit with the spatialization, with echoes of woodwind, percussion and strings.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EUROPE

by Stéphane Durand

Over millions of years, Europe has regularly been plunged into periods of cold, similar to the climate experienced in Greenland today. And it was during the last Ice Age that Homo sapiens found their way onto the continent, around 40,000 years ago. They discovered tundras that were home to huge herds of reindeer, muskoxen, mammoths, woolly rhinoceroses, saiga antelope, and Irish elk. They fought over their prey with wolves and lions, and for shelter, they competed with bears and hyenas for caves, and drew powerful images on their walls. This was the long Paleolithic era.

Then around 12,000 years ago, a tiny oscillation in the Earth's axis of rotation provoked a sudden warming. The glaciers melted and the major herds fled towards Siberia as the level of the seas rose by 120 meters. Different species of tree found their way into Europe in waves. The humans saw their hunting grounds invaded by trees, and the trees became sacred, glorifying the link between land and sky through their trunks. Humans became solitary hunters, aiming their bows and arrows at the passing bison, aurochs, horses, deer, and wild boar.

Then 6,000 years ago, the nomadic life of the hunter-gatherer disappeared as plants and animals were domesticated. This was the start of the Neolithic era. Humans became farmers, sedentary people, clearing and working the land, constructing settlements, harnessing and diverting waterways, and drying out the swamps. They modified the evolution of the natural world but progress was slow and took place over thousands of years. Many species benefited from the new environments created by humans, including the home. Everywhere people went across the continent, they created a patchwork of small inhabitations that helped encourage biodiversity in open spaces. But gradually, humankind turned its back on nature and withdrew into ever bigger, ever more populated cities.

For the past two centuries, our massive consumption of fossil fuels has left its mark on the land, and it goes deeper every day. Now humankind is saturating the space and it is nature that finds itself isolated. The balance has been disrupted and the world is changing. Human beings have become a geological force. The alterations we have imposed have happened so fast that very few species can keep up. The animals we have loved over previous centuries are suddenly under threat: Birds, frogs, snails, insects – what was once commonplace is now rare. Our springtimes have fallen silent as sparrows and swallows disappear from our towns without us even noticing.

But in our rush to the megalopolis, we have left behind vast territories that we inhabited in huge numbers such a short time ago. They are becoming overgrown once more, the trees are coming back, along with the big animals, the wolves and the vultures – species we once thought lost are reappropriating the free space. Is the wilderness perhaps slowly returning?

BEHIND THE SCENES

Prospecting For Fabulous Images

Mammoths wandering around Paris; whales, dolphins and seals swimming up the Seine; aurochs bellowing in the forests of Burgundy; sturgeons blocking the Rhone; ibex dancing in the creeks near Marseille; sudden rain showers making for enchanting summer evenings... We collected thousands of these stories as we made our way through books and research centers, meeting scientists and seeking out ever more points of view. We are prospectors, looking for fabulous images.

To recount 20,000 years of the history of Europe's wild animals, we took the time to linger in the vast universe of the sciences, the time to think, to dream, and to fool ourselves. Is it even possible to make a movie on a subject of which one is not a complete master? One probably needs to be properly crazy to launch oneself into such an adventure. Every film is a gamble, with enthusiasm as one's only guide. And SEASONS is doubly risky because we added a temporal dimension to the spatial one. One must dare to get lost in order to find oneself. Our screenplay remained open to the unforeseen, to doubt, and to surprise for as long as possible. There was maximum liberty with the writing.

On paper, anything is possible. And we retained that freedom right up to the editing, which made the work of all those handling the schedule, managing the budget, scouting locations, and working with animals all the trickier. Entire scenes might disappear overnight, reducing all their efforts to nothing. In particular, we spent a lot of time on location, with wild animals, trying to capture that magical moment. Nature is a set where you can't take control of the lighting. You have to wait, arm yourself with patience, and blend into the scenery.

Not knowing where you are going is the only way to preserve intact the curiosity that has been driving us since the start, the desire to get a closer view. It's about understanding creatures that are sometimes very close and which also express themselves, feel things, quiver with desire or fear, and share our territory and our history. Something happens around us that makes it worth worrying a little, lingering a while, and experiencing it is always enriching. To get that emotion across, we have to abandon our position as distant observer and look straight down into it, to participate in a movement of life itself, plunging into the heart of the action, among those creatures we are "observing", and live the world they are in just as they do.

Assimilation

Assimilation is a technique that allows us to get the necessary proximity in order to convey the emotions we are seeking. It enables us to regain a familiarity that has been lost after centuries of intensive hunting. Wild animals have developed a reflex to flee human beings that is much more powerful than the reflex to flee their "natural" predators. One must understand that this survival behavior is not natural. It is even abnormal given the millennia that went by during which time wild animals and humans lived in very close proximity. That is something that today, we can only find underwater or in the most remote places, such as Polar regions or big national parks, where we filmed sequences for *Oceans* and *Winged Migration*.

Assimilation allows the animal to live without fear, to go about their business without constraint, and to ignore the filmmakers who are so close by, and whose task is to capture footage of their best moments. The young animal is born with fear in its belly but also with a vital need for contact and bodily warmth. The challenge for the assimilator is to neutralize that atavistic fear as quickly as possible by adopting the animal immediately after birth. The assimilator thus plays the role of substitute mother. He or she ensures their presence is associated with moments of pleasure such as suckling, sleep, or play. Unlike training an animal, assimilation creates an almost symbiotic relationship of trust. Assimilators often say that one needs to have an excess of maternal love in order to do the job, which requires many other skills. And

complete availability, too, because animals have little concern for vacations or weekends off...

BIOGRAPHIES

Jacques Perrin, Director

Jacques Perrin has acted in more than 80 films, in Italy with directors including Valerio Zurlini, Mauro Bolognini, and Vittorio De Seta; and in France with names like Costa-Gavras, Jacques Demy, and Pierre Schoendoerffer. In 1968, at the age of 27, he produced the film *Z* by Costa-Gavras, which won two Oscars. This was followed by two other films from the same director, *State of Siege* and *Section Spéciale*. Jacques Perrin also produced *Black and White in Color* by Jean-Jacques Annaud, which also won an Oscar. His company has produced around 30 films. In 1989, he discovered the natural world when he produced *The Monkey Folk* with director Gérard Vienne. He then produced several films about nature and the animal kingdom including *Microcosmos* by Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérenou in 1996, and *Winged Migration* in collaboration with Jacques Cluzaud and Michel Debats the following year. In 1999, he produced *Himalaya* by Éric Valli, and then went on to produce two films by Christophe Barratier, *The Chorus* and *Faubourg 36*. In 2003, he began producing and codirecting *Oceans*, the shoot for which lasted five years, and which won a César award for Best Documentary. In 2010, he co-directed *L'Empire Du Milieu Du Sud* along with Eric Deroo.

2016 **LE SECRET D'ELISE** (Actor, TV mini-series)
2016 **LE PEUPLE DES FORÊTS** (Director, TV mini-series)
2015 **SEASONS** (Director)
2010 **L'EMPIRE DU MILIEU DU SUD** (Director)
2009 **OCEANS** (Director)
2001 **WINGED MIGRATION** (Director)
1999 **HIMALAYA** (Producer)
1996 **MICROCOSMOS** (Producer)
1989 **THE MONKEY FOLK** (Producer)
1968 **Z** (Producer)

Jacques Cluzaud, Director

After studying law and then cinema, Jacques Cluzaud worked as first assistant director during the 1980s on films including *Vaudeville*, *Flagrant Desire*, *Bille en Tête*, *Indochine* and *Lumumba*. He then moved into directing, mainly helming special format productions for the Futuroscope theme park in Poitiers, France. He co-directed *Winged Migration* and *Oceans* with Jacques Perrin.

2016 **LE PEUPLE DES FORÊTS** (Director, TV mini-series)
2015 **SEASONS** (Director)
2009 **OCEANS** (Director)
2001 **WINGED MIGRATION** (Director)
2000 **LUMUMBA** (First Assistant Director)
1992 **INDOCHINE** (Assistant Director)
1989 **BILL EN TÊTE** (First Assistant Director)
1986 **VAUDEVILLE** (First Assistant Director)

Stéphane Durand, Writer

Biologist, ornithologist, and scientific journalist, Stéphane Durand has co-authored and worked as a

scientific advisor on Jacques Perrin's cinematographical adventures since 1997: *Winged Migration* and *Oceans* for the cinema, *Les Ailes de la Nature* for TV, and *Voyageurs Du Ciel et De La Mer* for Futuroscope in Poitiers. He also made the documentaries *Sur Les Terres Du Panda* and *La Nuit Des Eléphants* as well as authoring the books associated with the films *Winged Migration*, *Oceans*, and now, *Seasons*.

2015 **SEASONS** (Writer)
2014 **LA NUIT DES ÉLÉPHANTS** (Writer)
2009 **OCEANS** (Writer)
2001 **WINGED MIGRATION** (Writer)

Bruno Coulais, Soundtrack Composer

Bruno Coulais is a French composer who was born in Paris on 13 January 1954. He was classically trained, and began his career as a composer of contemporary concert music before establishing a reputation as a composer for films. His career evolved through his various compositions, and in particular, his collaborations with the director François Reichenbach, who commissioned him in 1977 to write the score for the documentary *Mexico Magico*. He wrote his first feature-length score in 1986, *Qui Trop Embrasse*, by Jacques Davila. *Microcosmos* marked the start of a long and close collaboration with between Jacques Perrin and Bruno Coulais, with films as diverse as *Himalaya*, *Winged Migration*, *The Chorus*, and *Oceans*.

2015 **SEASONS**
2009 **OCEANS**
2004 **THE CHORUS**
2001 **WINGED MIGRATION**
1999 **HIMALAYA**
1986 **QUI TROP EMBRASSE**
1977 **MEXICO MAGICO**

CREW

Directors: Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud

Screenplay: Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud, Stéphane Durand

Production: Olli Barbe, Lydia Montes, Johann Mousseau, Dimitri Billecocq

Sound Design: Philippe Barbeau, Martine Todisco, Jerome Wiciak, Armelle Mahe, Gerard Lamps

Cinematography: Stephane Aupetit, Michel Benjamin, Jerome Bouvier, Laurent Charbonnier, Philippe Garguil, Eric Guichard, Laurent Fleutot, Sylvain Maillard, Christophe Pottier, Jan Walencik

Editor: Vincent Schmitt

Music: Bruno Coulais

Scientific advisors:

François Sarano, Member of the Academy of Valence

Philippe Descola, Professor at the Collège de France

Jean-Marie Pelt, President at the European Ecology Institute

Allain Bougrain-Dubourg, President of the French Bird Protection League

Gilles Bœuf, President of the Natural History Museum in Paris

Yves Coppens, Professor at the Collège de France Yvon Le Maho, Member of the Academy of Sciences

Jesse Ausubel of the Richard Lounsbery Foundation

About Music Box Films

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a North American distributor of acclaimed international, American independent and documentary features. Recent releases include Anne Fontaine's World War II drama **THE INNOCENTS** and the official Swedish Oscar submission for Best Foreign Language Film **A MAN CALLED OVE**, based on the international best selling novel. Upcoming releases include Terence Davies' **A QUIET PASSION** starring Cynthia Nixon and Francois Ozon's **FRANTZ**. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, please visit www.musicboxfilms.com.

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